

**LAW LEARNING IN ACTION**

**AN ACTION LEARNING PROJECT**

**TO EVALUATE PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES OF USING**

**LAW E-LEARNING OBJECTS IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

**Final Report: January 2011**

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## CONTENTS

<b><u>Executive Summary</u></b>	5
<b>1. <u>Introduction</u></b>	9
<b>2. <u>Rationale for the study</u></b>	9
<b>3. <u>Methodology</u></b>	10
<b>3.1 <u>Research questions</u></b>	10
<b>3.2 <u>The research design</u></b>	11
3.2.1 Collaborative capacity building	
3.2.2 Summary of methods use	
3.2.3 Phases of the research	
3.2.4 Further details on methods	
3.2.5 Critical friends	
<b>3.3 <u>Ethical approval and accountabilities</u></b>	17
<b>4. <u>The teaching interventions</u></b>	18
<b>5. <u>Research findings outcomes for educators</u></b>	19
<b>5.1 <u>Profile of the educators</u></b>	19
<b>5.2 <u>Changes in the educators' experience and attitude to e-learning</u></b>	20
5.2.1 Attitudes, motivators and barriers to the use of e-learning	
5.2.2 Orientation to the use of computers and e-learning in education	
<b>5.3 <u>Educators reflection on the learning set experience</u></b>	31
5.3.1 Teaching law	
5.3.2 The experience of the learning set	
5.3.3 The experience of using the SCIE social work law reusable learning objects	
<b>6. <u>Research findings: outcomes for student learning</u></b>	46
<b>6.1 <u>Findings from student questionnaires</u></b>	46
6.1.1 Modes of learning	
6.1.2 Students' confidence in knowledge and skills in relation to law	
6.1.3 Students' experience of computer use and attitudes to the e-learning environment	
6.1.4 Findings from the additional questions at Time 2	

<b>6.2</b>	<b><u><a href="#">Findings from student focus groups</a></u></b>	60
6.2.1	<i>Perceptions of law</i>	
6.2.2.	<i>Learning law</i>	
6.2.3	<i>Student attitudes towards e-learning</i>	
6.2.4	<i>Student experiences of using the social work law reusable learning objects</i>	
6.2.5	<i>The impact of using the e-learning objects on student social work law learning</i>	
6.2.6	<i>How knowledgeable, skilled and confident do students feel about law in social work?</i>	
6.2.7	<i>Student perspectives on how law should be taught and how qualifying social workers should learn about it</i>	
<b>7.</b>	<b><u><a href="#">Conclusions</a></u></b>	87
7.1	<u><a href="#">Collaborative capacity building</a></u>	87
7.2	<u><a href="#">E-learning as a contribution to student learning about the law</a></u>	89
7.3	<u><a href="#">Key messages</a></u>	89
7.4	<u><a href="#">Conclusion</a></u>	90
	<u><a href="#">References</a></u>	91
	<b>Appendices</b>	
<u><a href="#">Appendix 1</a></u>	SCIE law e-learning objects and their associated learning outcomes	93
<u><a href="#">Appendix 2</a></u>	Adapted Kirkpatrick/Barr model - application to the research questions	97
<u><a href="#">Appendix 3</a></u>	Questionnaires	99
<u><a href="#">Appendix 4</a></u>	Topic list for student focus groups	102
<u><a href="#">Appendix 5</a></u>	Topic list for educator interviews	103
<u><a href="#">Appendix 6</a></u>	Examples of how the law e-learning objects were integrated within the law curriculum	104

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**Suzy Braye and Michael Preston-Shoot**  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. Introduction

The research, funded by the Social Care Institute for Excellence, evaluated the processes and outcomes of using a suite of e-learning objects to support law teaching on social work degree programmes (<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/elearning/law/index.asp>). The evaluation tracked a group of educators in 6 universities as they participated in a learning set to engage with the law e-learning objects and to develop skills in evaluating their outcomes for students.

### 2. Methodology

The research sought to explore how educators blended the law e-learning objects with their teaching; how students and educators alike experienced their use; what processes and challenges arose; what outcomes resulted for student learning. Over 2 academic years, the e-learning objects were used in a variety of ways, including educators embedding them in lectures, students making use of them during their private study time, tutor-directed tasks in preparation for or following class, structured student small group work in PC clusters, and evidence of completion for assessment purposes. The evaluation design included:

- Learning set meetings throughout the 2½ years, exploring the processes, challenges and outcomes of using and evaluating the SCIE law e-learning objects;
- Repeat questionnaires to track changes in educator orientation to e-learning;
- Reflective diary entries and interviews with educators;
- Repeat questionnaires to track changes in student orientation to e-learning, perceptions of the utility of different learning modes, and changes in confidence in law knowledge.
- Student focus groups sought student perceptions of e-learning in their law module.

### 3. Findings

#### **(a) Educators' experience of the learning set: findings from interviews and questionnaires**

Making links for students between law and its practice application was seen as a core but challenging teaching goal; creativity and innovation were vital to engaging interest and overcoming fears. The learning set was seen as a way of capturing space and support to experiment with innovation, and build knowledge and confidence. Positive experiences in the learning set were its contribution to:

- Motivation to engage and continue with innovation;
- Shared learning and support with that learning;
- Breaking down feelings of isolation with the responsibility of law teaching;
- More positive views of e-learning and greater confidence in using it;
- Empowerment to make changes of approach to teaching law, perhaps taking risks to try new things and find a more personally satisfying experience of teaching;
- Embedding e-learning within the curriculum and enhancing learning modes for students;
- Development of a researcher identity.

Barriers to implementing e-learning strategies included difficulty securing appropriate and reliable technology/technology support in the HEIs, lack of confidence in engaging with technology, securing ethical approval for evaluation, and pressures of time leading to reliance on tried and tested approaches. Less positive learning set processes were:

- Insufficient lead in time to use and experiment with the e-learning objects and to develop the familiarity needed to decide where and how to use them;
- The diversity of teaching interventions being made, resulting in participants being at different stages when the learning set met, making commonality harder to establish;
- Tension between the flexibility accorded to participants and later recognition of the benefits of greater standardisation in tracking student outcomes.

By the end of the research, the educators showed increased experience of and confidence in using e-learning; changes of belief in the utility of e-learning were less apparent, but had been high to start with. Confidence was not always accompanied by increased satisfaction with e-learning. Exposure to the pedagogic and practical complexities of developing blended learning approaches may have provoked more critical later appraisal of satisfaction.

#### **(b) Educators' experiences of using the law e-learning objects: findings from interviews**

Educators were enthusiastic about many aspects of the law e-learning objects. They:

- Add variety to a teaching session, changing the content and pace;
- Allow options and variety for students with different learning styles;
- Are accessible, with good signposting and a clear sequence of learning built in;
- Are interactive, requiring students to make choices and decisions, and giving feedback;
- Can be used to consolidate, reinforce and test learning;
- Stimulate debate, linking law to contemporary events, connecting law to practice;
- Give students confidence.

Equally the educators were critical of other aspects. The e-learning objects can be:

- Clumsy sometimes to navigate;
- Too long, and insufficiently fragmented into 'bite sized chunks';
- Visually unpleasing. Simple cartoon drawings were considered inappropriate;
- Difficult to explore in relation to specific areas of law, because content is integrated. Thus educators struggle to fit particular objects to more segmented curriculum content;
- Difficult to link to different stages of student learning. The level of learning addressed is not specified and each contains both simple and complex material;
- Sometimes unbalanced in content (eg the range of service user and carer perspectives).

Other developments that would be valued include refinements such as:

- A glossary and an index, indicating where specific content may be found;
- Some means of tracking students' use of the e-learning objects;
- More explicit ways of linking the objects to student assessment tasks; student engagement is stronger when learning is seen to support assessment performance.

#### **(c) Outcomes for student learning: findings from the questionnaires**

The results from student questionnaires draw on a matched sample of 143 students.

*(i) Findings on modes of learning*

The majority of students were positive about the teaching methods used in their social work law modules. The top methods (lectures, written materials, case studies, and outside speakers) were rated 'very useful' or 'useful' by between 96% and 99% of participants. The lowest rated mode of learning was e-learning, but independent e-learning was still considered useful or very useful by 85% of respondents, and classroom e-learning by 86%.

*(ii) Findings on students' confidence in knowledge and skills in relation to law*

Students' confidence about the law/social work relationship increased between the start and the end of their law learning, showing a significant, moderate effect. Students' confidence in knowledge of law and its application also increased, with significant improvement in four questions; "recording according to standards laid out in guidance and case law" and "managing the relationship between law & social work values" showed small effect, while "identifying legal rules" and "applying legal rules to cases" showed a moderate effect. In 4 areas students felt less confident ("consulting lawyers", "assessing risks & needs", "working in partnership with service users & carers", "using legal & positional authority in an anti-oppressive way"). The decreases may be attributable to greater understanding of these challenges after the teaching and thus less confidence than earlier.

*(ii) Findings on students' experience of computers and attitudes to e-learning*

There was no significant change in levels of experience of using computer technologies. In attitudes to e-learning, there was one significant change ("I can read the online instructions actively"). Asked whether online learning was of equal quality to traditional learning, students showed no significant change over the means of the two time periods, but there was a distinct shift in opinion towards more favorable views of e-learning's value at Time 2.

**(d) Student experiences of using the e-learning objects: findings from the focus groups**

Students were anxious about law and overwhelmed by the breadth, depth and complexity of learning. However, they recognized law as giving practitioners authority and legitimacy, and useful to them as guardians of human rights. When educators make law accessible, bring it alive and connect it to practice, students 'learn the language', acquire confidence and overcome their antipathy. Nonetheless, the breadth and depth of knowledge required continues to daunt and students want law embedded at all levels of study, not just in one module. The e-learning objects had helped students develop confidence in their knowledge. They were easy to use, visual and interactive, making learning fun and interesting. The condensed and ordered presentation of information made law more accessible for some. Positive aspects of e-learning and the law e-learning objects in particular were seen as:

- The ways in which they bring learning alive and make connections to real cases;
- The emotional impact of stories and cases, which enhanced learning;
- Short, bite-sized chunks of learning so that students can dip in and dip out;
- Objects in which student interaction is required and feedback on answers is given;
- Tutor input and direction on what objects to look at, when and why;
- Use of objects in class to stimulate discussion, followed by individual study time;
- Using the objects themselves to track and benchmark their level of understanding;
- Objects in which content is clearly badged and well signposted;

- A mix of styles within the objects to account for student preferences.

Less positive views expressed included:

- The need for more support to develop computer literacy and technical know-how;
- Concern that e-learning can encourage surface rather than deep learning;
- Preference for learning that allows discussion and interaction with other people;
- Being put off by the 'cartoon' visual appearance of the law e-learning objects;
- Difficulty when objects do not segment easily and take too long to complete;
- Frustration with several pages of text to be read before any interaction is required;
- Uncertainty about the level of difficulty of an object before it is attempted;
- Optional rather than mandated use of the objects implying they were less important;
- Perceived gaps in content, legal issues which were not covered by any of the objects.

### **(e) Conclusions**

Most students and all the educators, whilst able to make suggestions for improvement, found the e-learning objects helpful and supportive, offering a different and complementary experience to other learning approaches. Students were quick to follow an enthusiastic lead from their lecturer, and preferred e-learning that took place, whether in class or independently, under the tutor's guidance, with the opportunity to feed back and discuss.

Three key messages emerge:

- Blended learning: E-learning brings an additional dimension that has visual and affective impact, clarity, accessibility, and interactivity. Careful thought to what the medium offers, and what messages it can most effectively carry, is essential in mixing the blend.
- Embedded learning: The e-learning objects were most effective when embedded as core elements of the law learning, alongside other activities under the direction and guidance of the tutor, presenting e-learning as explicit added value rather than an optional extra.
- Staging and layering learning: Signposting what each e-learning object offers and at what level, is vital. Within objects, layering of content helps incremental progression, giving choice about pace/depth, and building deep knowledge on strong foundations.

The learning set gave members a better understanding of e-learning and greater confidence in blending different media together in the teaching of law to social work students. As knowledge of the e-learning objects deepened, educators were more challenged by the process of linking them clearly to student learning objectives. Responsiveness to students' experiences of learning was strong, and triggered iterative engagement with solving problems and/or fine-tuning the pedagogic approaches used.

Evaluating the outcomes of social work education was a new activity for most, requiring engagement with new knowledge, experienced at times as a steep learning curve, and one which benefited from the iterative nature of the study design, offering the opportunity to experiment, test and refine approaches over time. This has afforded valuable learning about both single site and cross-institutional studies and provided a strong foundation for building capacity to secure robust evidence of the outcomes of social work education.



# **LAW LEARNING IN ACTION: AN ACTION LEARNING PROJECT TO EVALUATE PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES OF LAW E-LEARNING OBJECTS IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

## **1. Introduction**

This document reports on a research project funded by the Social Care Institute for Excellence to evaluate the processes and outcomes (for social work students and educators) of using a suite of e-learning objects within law teaching on social work degree programmes. The e-learning objects in question were published by SCIE in 2007<sup>1</sup>, and those involved in their development<sup>2</sup> were keen to explore how they were being used, and what their impact might be. The research, which started in 2008 and reached completion in 2010, has tracked a group of educators in 6 universities as they have engaged in a process of collaborative capacity building, through participation in a learning set designed to support their own engagement with e-learning and to develop skills in evaluating their outcomes for students. A full list of the SCIE law e-learning objects and their associated learning outcomes is given at Appendix 1.

## **2. Rationale for the study**

Governments in all four countries of the United Kingdom specify the inclusion of law within their requirements for initial qualifying level social work education (Care Council for Wales, 2004; Department of Health, 2002; Northern Ireland Social Care Council, 2003; Scottish Executive, 2003). Knowledge of the legal rules and skills in their application are prominent in the social work subject benchmark statement (QAA, 2008), which informs all four sets of requirements, and in the National Occupational Standards (Care Council for Wales, 2004; Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2003; Scottish Executive, 2003; TOPSS, 2002).

Research into how law is taught and assessed on social work programmes, however, has revealed evidence of widely varying approaches in education practice, accompanied by a perception (shared between students and educators) that law is a difficult aspect of the social work curriculum (Braye and Preston-Shoot 2005). The research found that only very early attention had been paid to the potential for e-learning approaches to contribute to the development of social work students' knowledge and skills in law, and social work educators' engagement with e-learning in this subject area had been (with one or two notable exceptions) minimal.

As greater emphasis began to be placed on e-learning in social work education, government (in both Scotland and England) invested in the development of e-learning materials for core areas of the social work initial qualification curriculum. During 2006-07 SCIE funded collaboration between subject experts and e-learning experts to produce the series of e-learning objects referred to above, to support social work degree students' learning of law.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/elearning/law/index.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Two of the present authors, and the project team at SCIE.

The approach taken in the evaluation that is the subject of this present report was to seek qualitative, in-depth information on the early adoption by social work educators of the SCIE law e-learning objects, and quantitative and qualitative data on their outcomes for student learning.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research questions

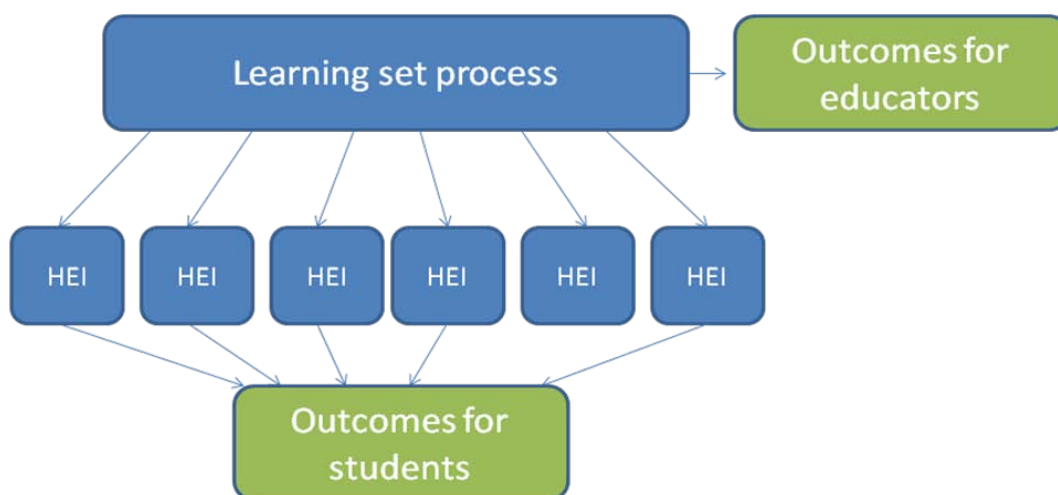
The study aimed to contribute to the evidence base on social work education by seeking preliminary answers to a number of questions that could be anticipated during the early stages of introducing the law e-learning objects into the curriculum. The questions were:

*Given the perception of law as a difficult subject, and the beginning levels of expertise in e-learning within the social work academy:*

- *How do educators use the law e-learning objects to support social work students' law learning?*
- *How do students and educators alike experience their use?*
- *What are the processes and challenges that arise?*
- *What are the early outcomes for student learning?*

The study thus took a dual focus on outcomes/processes for educators and outcomes/processes for students, as show in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The study design



The diversity of education practice in teaching law to social work students provided both a challenge and an opportunity in exploring the above questions. Whilst controlled comparison of outcomes would be difficult to achieve, the diversity of education practice provided a natural test-bed for exploring and mapping how educators go about the initial

task of determining how to use the e-learning objects within their approach to teaching law, and how they and their students experience this process and its outcomes.

## **3.2 The research design**

### *3.2.1 Collaborative capacity building*

The researchers set out to engage in a process of ‘collaborative capacity building’, modeled in part on the learning set approach used in the SCIE/SIESWE funded Outcomes of Social Work Education project (Burgess and Carpenter 2010). Collaborative capacity building is characterized by peer learning through participation in an action learning set, with specialist support advice and mentoring. Participants may involve others in their home HEI, building (along with others in the learning set) a community of situated practice. The learning and knowledge thus developed contributes to a raised profile nationally for outcome focused pedagogic research (Burgess and Carpenter, 2008). The use of parallel methods offered the opportunity potentially to compare and contrast the processes and outcomes of action learning sets as a means of collaborative capacity building in social work education, although that comparison is not the subject of the present report.

In the present case, the capacities being built were, first, capacity for engagement with the SCIE law e-learning objects in the context of law teaching to social work students. Educators were free to use the e-learning objects in whichever ways they chose, within the confines of their own curriculum and approach. Second, the learning set aimed to build capacity in evaluating the outcomes of the use of the law e-learning objects, in terms of the processes and impacts for both educators and students. The learning set used the adapted Kirkpatrick/Barr model<sup>3</sup> (Carpenter 2005) as a means of structuring its thinking on evaluation of outcomes, focusing attention on outcomes that might be observed at levels 1, 2 and possibly 3. The full framework and its potential application to the research questions are demonstrated at Appendix 2.

### *3.2.2 Summary of methods used*

Within this broad framework, the study used a mixed methods approach which sought to track and quantify changes (for educators) in orientation to the use of e-learning in teaching and (for students) their perspectives on, and engagement with, e-learning, alongside other modes of learning, and the contribution of the law e-learning objects to their knowledge and confidence in law. Qualitative methods were used to seek understanding of the processes involved in collaborative capacity building, in developing and using e-learning, and in building knowledge and confidence in law. Equally there was an important descriptive component to tracking the learning set experience. Table 1 summarises the methods used; further details on each aspect of the approach are given later in this section.

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<sup>3</sup> Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1967) ‘Evaluation of Training’ in R.L. Craig, & L. R. Bittel, *Training and Development Handbook*. pp.87-112. New York, McGraw-Hill.

Barr, H., Freeth, D., Hammick, M., Koppel, I. and Reeves, S. (2000) *Evaluating Interprofessional Education: A United Kingdom Review of Health and Social Care*. London, British Educational Research Association (BERA)/Centre for Advancement of Interprofessional education (CAIPE).

*Table 1: Summary of methods used*

Method	Purpose
Learning set meetings throughout the 2½ years of the study	To facilitate the process of collaborative capacity building, enabling educators to explore together the processes, challenges and outcomes of using the SCIE law e-learning objects in their law teaching
Educator questionnaires (T1, T2 and T3 – start, middle and end of the project)	To identify any changes in educator orientation to the use of computers in teaching and perceptions of the value of e-learning
Educator reflective diaries throughout the 2½ years of the study	To capture the process of collaborative capacity building and of building orientation to the use of the e-learning objects in teaching
Educator interviews at the end of the 2½ years of the study	To reflect on the process of collaborative capacity building for e-learning in the learning set, and on the impact on law teaching
Student questionnaires (T1 and T2 – before and after law teaching) for two consecutive cohorts of student in two consecutive academic years	To identify orientation to e-learning, perceptions of the utility of different modes of learning, and changes in confidence in law knowledge
Student focus groups in each HEI (after law teaching for two consecutive cohorts of students in two consecutive academic years)	To explore students' perceptions of law learning and the contribution of the e-learning objects to that learning
Consultation with critical friends, and critical friends' involvement in learning set meetings on 4 occasions	To facilitate learning set members' learning on methods for evaluating the outcomes of social work education, to develop innovation in the use of e-learning, and to mitigate the potential bias of insider research

### *3.2.3 Phases of the research*

- *Phase 1 (January to September 2008)*

The researchers made an open call for participation in the law learning set; the requirements were that the social work educators involved should be responsible for teaching law to social work students, be able to introduce the law e-learning objects into their curriculum, and be able to commit to the research for a period of 2½ years. This would allow for a preparation period of 6 months, then two whole academic years in which to track the iterative process of development in the use of the e-learning objects and the evaluation of their use. In the event, all 7 universities who expressed an interest were invited to participate, and 6 remained involved with the set for the whole period, each sending a consistent participant throughout and thus creating a committed and relatively stable group.

During phase 1, the e-learning set met on 3 occasions – April, July and September 2008. The focus was first upon familiarisation and experimentation with the law e-learning objects within the learning set; educators were asked to determine for themselves how the objects might be used within the context of their own approach to law teaching. Second, participants considered the tools and methods of evaluation, and together determined how both the process of adoption of the e-learning objects, and the outcomes of their use for students, would be evaluated. Advice on this aspect of the study was sought from Professor John Carpenter, University of Bristol, who attended an e-learning set meeting during this period and remained involved as a critical friend to advise on methods for the remainder of the project. Baseline measures of educators' orientation to e-learning were taken and educators were asked to keep a reflective diary, recording both the decisions they took in relation to their law teaching and their perspectives the process of participating in the collaborative research.

- *Phase 2 (academic year 2008-09)*

In phase 2, educators implemented their plans to use the e-learning objects during their law teaching. The e-learning set met on 1 occasion (January 2009), with a further planned meeting postponed into the start of phase 3. Approximately half of the educators taught law in the autumn term/semester, whilst the remainder taught it in the spring term/semester. This allowed for a degree of reflection on the experiences of those teaching first, and the opportunity for adjustments to plans by the others in the light of their colleagues' experience. The learning set benefitted from the involvement of a second critical friend, Robert Johns, whose expertise in e-learning and social work education provided the opportunity to develop new approaches and consider their role in a blended learning approach to law teaching. Baseline measures (T1) of students' knowledge of law, and of their orientation to e-learning, were taken prior to the teaching, with a second measure (T2) following the teaching; at Time 2, students' perceptions of the utility of different modes of learning were also sought (including e-learning used in the classroom and independently). After the teaching had taken place, one of the researchers attended a student focus group at each HEI, at which qualitative data on students' experience of the e-learning objects in the context of their law learning were sought. At the end of the year, a repeat measure (T2) of educators' orientation to e-learning was taken. Reflective diary entries were continued.

- *Phase 3 (academic year 2009-10)*

In phase 3 a further iteration took place, implementing developments in the use of the e-learning objects in teaching, in the light of experience in phase 2. The e-learning set met on 3 occasions (November 2009, July 2010 and September 2010), with the two critical friends attending one meeting each. Again student measures were taken prior to and following the law learning sequence, and a further student focus group took place at each HEI. In addition, during these HEI visits, a semi-structured qualitative interview took place with each educator (and in two sites with other colleagues who had been involved in the law teaching alongside them). At the end of the year, a repeat measure (T3) of educators' orientation to e-learning was taken. Reflective diary entries were continued. Additionally in phase 3 e-learning set members presented a conference workshop reflecting on the processes and learning involved in their participation in the set, and reporting early data on student outcomes.

### 3.2.4 Further details on methods

- *Learning set meetings*

Meeting on 7 occasions overall, the learning set functioned as a source of learning, consultation and support for participants, enabling sharing of ideas and approaches to the use of the objects, trouble-shooting in relation to challenges encountered, and reflection and review of approaches to teaching and learning. Each meeting started with a standard checking in process, in which members updated each other on their law teaching and their use of the e-learning objects, the challenges involved and any issues they wished to use time to explore. The agenda would then reflect the stage of the research process. For example, in phase 1 and again in phase 3, the learning set members benefitted from the participation of their research methods critical friend John Carpenter, to support the development of their understanding of evaluation techniques. In phase 2 and again in phase 3, the set's second critical friend, Robert Johns attended to support discussion of the challenges and benefits of e-learning. The majority of the learning set meetings were taped and transcribed (where they were not, extensive notes were taken), and the transcripts/notes subjected to analysis, both to extract themes relating to the research questions and to track the emergent process of collaborative capacity building over time.

- *Questionnaires*

Extensive searching and networking for suitable tools for tracking educator and student outcomes in relation to e-learning resulted in the selection of two particular questionnaires. Liaw et al (2007a; 2007b) provide two parallel instruments for tracking educator and student experience of, and orientation to, the use of computers and e-learning in education. Panda and Mishra (2007) provide an instrument for identifying educator attitudes, motivators and barriers to the use of e-learning. The questionnaires were selected from a trawl of the available literature on experience of and attitudes to e-learning, primarily to ensure the use of empirically-based psychometrically-sound instruments. Both sets of questionnaire authors were contacted for discussion and guidance about the use of their questionnaires, but neither responded to the invitation. The questionnaires are available at Appendix 3.

The Liaw et al student questionnaire was incorporated within a more extensive custom-built questionnaire for students which also sought to identify the perceived utility of different modes of learning) and confidence in law knowledge, completed at T1 and T2 (before and after law teaching). There were no published alternatives to the custom-built questions. The Liaw et al educator questionnaire and the Panda and Mishra educator questionnaire were completed by the educators at T1, T2 and T3 (close to the start of the project, at the end of the first full year of teaching delivery, and at the end of the second full year of teaching delivery. Data from the questionnaires were analysed using SPSSv17.

In practice, the process of administering the student questionnaire over 6 sites, over 2 years, proved challenging. Given that the learning set was intended to be a forum for discussion, iteration and change in approaches, a decision was taken to adjust the questionnaire half way through the first full year of its use, in the light of the experience of

those who had used it in their autumn term teaching. Further changes were made in some sites as a result of local factors which required a different approach, and in one case as a condition of local ethical approval. Some further changes were made between years 1 and 2, but although the intention was to use a common questionnaire in year 2, this was not achieved in relation to all sites. Not all sites used the questionnaire at both time points (before and after law teaching) and in some sites it was not possible to match all Time 1 and Time 2 responses. In addition, some of the questions on the standard questionnaires adopted from Liaw et al (2007) and Panda and Mishra (2007) proved confusing for students, and thus some responses were unclear. This process of change and development means that the potential size of the data set relating to student outcomes is reduced, as only common factors can be included in analysis of changes taking place between Time 1 and Time 2. In the final analysis, 143 matched pairs are identified across the 2 years – i.e. students whose responses can be matched at Time 1 and Time 2. A further 135 students answered a common set of questions at Time 1, and 55 unmatched replies answered the common set of questions at Time 2.

Two of the institutions used a separate questionnaire, which had some SCIE e-learning object specific questions. There were 117 replies to these T2 only questionnaires, and some analysis has been included here because of its utility in understanding learners' views of using the e-learning objects.

In the light of the very useful and important learning that has occurred during this process, agreement was reached with SCIE, and with the participants from the 6 universities involved, that a further iteration of student questionnaires would take place during the academic year 2010-11<sup>4</sup>. In addition 3 further universities joined the project. The student questionnaire was substantially revised and adopted by all sites for use at T1 and T2. The early decision to adopt a validated instrument was revisited in the light of concerns about its utility and applicability in social work education in the UK. Liaw et al (2007) originates in Taiwan, and was developed and used with students and educators involved in an 'Introduction to Computer Science' course; it adopts a very broad definition of e-learning, and this is reflected in the questions asked. Although some elements of the original instrument have been retained, the revised questionnaire for the repeat year of the present study is more closely relevant to the context in which law teaching is being delivered to social work students, and to the focus on the law e-learning objects.

- *Reflective diaries*

Educators were asked to make reflective diary entries at any points in their involvement with the study which held significance for them – for example, before/after learning set meetings, during familiarisation with the e-learning objects, during their reflection and decision-making on using the e-learning objects in their law teaching and during their law teaching itself. The entries were sent to the researchers, either in hard copy or electronic files, and were subject to analysis to extract themes. In reality, the reflective diaries were not a major source of data; some participants made relatively little use of them, although others used them at significant points to capture 'live' reflections which then provided an

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<sup>4</sup> The results of this extended year's research will be available from the authors in September 2011.

important insight into how participation in the project was being experienced, and into the processes of decision making about law teaching.

- *Student focus groups*

One of the researchers visited each university after the law teaching had taken place, in each of the two full years of tracking student outcomes. The educator involved from that university made arrangements for students to be invited to attend a focus group, which took place over a lunch period, with lunch provided for those attending. The purpose was to explore students' perceptions of law learning and the contribution of the e-learning objects to that learning; the topic list for the groups may be found at Appendix 4. Between 3 and 30 students attended the meetings (12 meetings took place over the 2 years), with the larger groups requiring a more structured style of facilitation to ensure participation. The educator did not attend, and students were assured that their views would be anonymised, and that they would not be identified through the attribution of particular comments. The discussions were either (with students' permission) recorded and transcribed, or extensive notes were taken, and the transcripts/notes were subjected to analysis to identify themes relating to the research questions and other evidence of students' experience of law teaching and/or the use of e-learning within it. The focus groups proved to be a rich source of data on students' perspectives.

- *Educator interviews*

In the second of the two full years of teaching which incorporated the e-learning objects, at the time of the university visit for the student focus group, the researchers undertook a qualitative interview with the educator involved. The topic list may be found at Appendix 5. The purpose was to reflect on the process of collaborative capacity building for e-learning in the learning set, and on its impact on the educator's law teaching. The interviews were (with permission) recorded and transcribed, and analysed to extract themes.

- *Service user and carer perspectives and student perspectives*

It was originally envisaged that users and carers involved in the law teaching in the universities in question would be invited to participate in a learning set meeting. In the event, although all the participating universities had well established user and carer involvement in their programmes, in-person involvement did not feature in their law teaching specifically, and for this reason it was judged inappropriate to create artificial participation in the learning set. Similarly the feasibility and value of involving students in the learning set, as originally proposed, was revisited in the light of the strong student engagement that was achieved in the HEI visits. Given that the views of students were fully explored and expressed, the learning set concluded that any potential gains from student involvement in the learning set itself would be outweighed by the inevitable change of focus and process that this would entail. A more viable alternative was considered to be the possibility of running a student conference to profile law learning, the e-learning objects and the findings of the research; this is for discussion with SCIE as an idea for the future.



### *3.2.5 Critical friends*

The learning set sought involvement from two critical friends, whose participation was focused on two particular aspects of the research. Professor John Carpenter, University of Bristol agreed to provide advice and support on research methods for evaluating both the collaborative capacity building aspect of the study, and the outcomes for student learning. Robert Johns, University of East London, agreed to provide advice and support on e-learning in social work education, and in law teaching in particular. Both critical friends attended two meetings of the learning set (at different times), and provided advice directly to the researchers also in preparation for or following meetings.

A further role for the critical friends was to minimise the danger of unacknowledged bias; the involvement of the second critical friend in particular, Robert Johns, was secured in part to take the role of adviser to the researchers in their management of the project and their interpretation of the data in relation to the perceived quality of the SCIE e-learning objects themselves. The potential for bias arose because the researchers themselves were centrally involved in the production of the law e-learning objects, having worked with SCIE as subject experts in their development. As well as convening the learning set to explore the use made by others of the e-learning objects, they remained actively involved in teaching law to social work students themselves, and were developing the use of the e-learning objects in relation to their own curricula and modes of delivery. This prior and on-going relationship was identified as creating potential bias within the evaluation, although this was mitigated by other factors. For example, the focus of the evaluation was rather more upon the use of the objects within the independently devised educational interventions of others than upon the learning objects in themselves. Moreover, as experienced educators with an enduring concern for good outcomes of student learning in their subject, the researchers approached the research with curiosity and open-mindedness about the possibilities opened up by new learning technologies, and were not wedded to particular outcomes in relation to adoption of the e-learning object or their impacts.

Whilst bias must be acknowledged, the status of 'insider researcher' is recognised as one that brings particular opportunities (Kanuha, 2000) and is integral to action research in educational contexts where researchers are not "outsiders peering from the shadows into the classroom, but insiders responsible to the students whose learning we document" (Zeni, 1998, p.10). Indeed the OSWE project was itself built upon the participants' status as insider researchers in the context of their own institutions and educational inputs.

### **3.3 Ethical approval and accountabilities**

Ethical approval for the study was gained from the University of Bedfordshire and University of Sussex (Sussex Institute) Research Ethics Committees. The involvement of all participants in the learning set was based on their informed consent, with the option to withdraw at any time, or from any part of the study. Whilst the ethical approval also covered student participation, some of the participating universities required local approval by their own research ethics committees, and where required this was obtained by the learning set participant. Particular attention was paid to ensuring that student participation was

anonymous, and kept distinct from any question of assessment or course grades, and to ensure that any additional demands on students as a result of their universities' participation were minimised.

Accountability was fulfilled to SCIE, as the funder of the research, through the provision of interim summary reports on project activity at the end of phases 1 and 2.

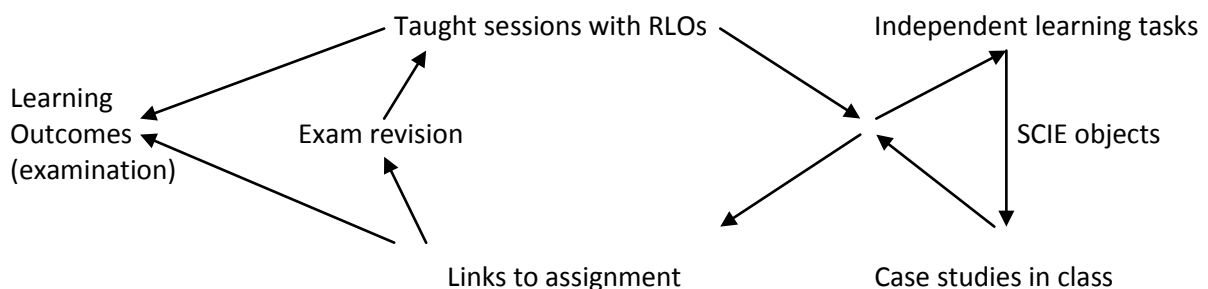
#### 4. The teaching interventions

Educators were free to use the e-learning objects in whatever way they chose during the course of their teaching. In practice, over the two years of teaching that were tracked, a number of models emerged:

- Students were encouraged to access the e-learning objects during their private study time for the module, but without specific direction as to which objects when;
- Students were asked to work through specific e-learning objects as part of their private study in preparation for classes on specific topics;
- Students were asked to work through specific e-learning objects as part of their private study to consolidate learning following classes on specific topics at specific points in their module;
- Students were asked to work in small group clusters around PCs during scheduled class time, with or without the lecturer present to guide and consult;
- Educators used specific e-learning objects in class, as part of a lecture to the whole student group;
- Educators used evidence of student completion of specific e-learning objects as part of the requirements for assessment of learning on the module.

Some educators explicitly linked the e-learning objects to specific learning objectives week by week, making explicit to students the purpose of engaging with the e-learning, and subsequently reviewing their use and perception of the objects, and the application of learning to cases discussed in class. One such approach is demonstrated diagrammatically in Figure 2:

*Figure 2: Integration of the RLOs with the learning strategy*



Detailed examples of the ways in which specific objects were integrated within teaching are given at Appendix 6. Other educators were less prescriptive, and gave students freedom to engage with whichever e-learning objects they chose or were drawn to.

The diversity of interventions is a challenge in evaluation terms, and clearly the level of exposure to the e-learning objects varied between HEIs, and from year to year as educators built iteratively upon their experience. In the further iteration of the student questionnaires taking place during 2010-11, the educators have agreed on a minimum number of e-learning objects to which students will be exposed (and which those will be) and the student questionnaire gathers more specific information about student exposure to and use of those and other e-learning objects within the suite of resources available.

## 5. Research Findings: Outcomes for Educators

### 5.1 Profile of the Educators Involved

The e-learning set consisted of 8 participants (including 2 researchers) who were based in Social Work departments in HEIs in England. Six members of the group were female and 2 were male. The majority (n=5) were Senior Lecturers, one was a Lecturer and two were Professors. They were all 35 or older, with an age profile as shown in Table 2.

*Table 2: Age profile of participants in the learning set*

Age range	Number
35-40	2
41-45	1
46-50	2
55-60	3

The spread of experience in social work education was wide, between 1 and 20 years at the start of the project. One respondent added a note to their response to point out that they were just completing their first year's teaching experience at the start of the project, but there wasn't a category to allow for this. There was some shift in categories (shown in Table 3) over the length of the study, for instance the participant who was new to teaching fell more readily into the category with 1-5 years experience at the end, and where initially one respondent fell into the 16-20 category, they moved into the 21-25 category between collection times.

*Table 3: Experience in social work education*

Years Teaching	Number
1-5	3
6-10	2
16-20	2
21-25	1

All members of the group were more recent users of e-learning technologies, reporting the length of experience as between 1 and 5 years. All reported daily use of computers for word processing and presentations, email use, and all but one reported daily use of the web for information searching. One person reported this final category as weekly use instead.

### ***5.2 Changes in the educators' experience of and attitudes to e-learning***

The educators completed the two chosen educator questionnaires (Liaw et al 2007; Panda and Mishra 2007), at 3 time points during the life of the study:

- Time 1: During the setting up period of the project (July 2008);
- Time 2: At the end of the first full year of teaching using the e-learning objects (September 2009);
- Time 3: At the end of the second full year of teaching using the e-learning objects (September 2010)

All eight participants took part in T1 and T2. T3 had seven respondents, and one of these chose not to answer two of the questions. Because of the small size of the sample, testing 'significance' statistically was inappropriate. Instead, a measure of 'effect' has been used. Although across the different universities use of the e-learning objects was diverse, this measure starts to demonstrate some of the strengths and challenges associated with using e-learning in law for social work

#### ***5.2.1 Attitudes, motivators and barriers to the use of e-learning (Panda & Mishra educator questionnaire)***

The 50 questions in the questionnaire derived from Panda and Mishra identify educator attitudes, motivators and barriers to the use of e-learning. They divide into 26 'positive' and 24 'negative' questions. Through the three iterations of questionnaire completion, many show fluctuating changes in opinions over the recurrent questioning periods, suggesting an embedding period for the use of e-learning and the technologies involved, and shifts of opinion reflecting this. For instance, 15 of the questions had their highest scores during the second iteration, while 14 scored lowest here.

In order to gauge 'effect' over time, the questionnaires were compared at T1 and T3. This was done using the difference between means (M) of replies, which were received via a Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree, and the standard deviation (SD) to determine the spread of replies. A score of 3 signifies neither agreeing nor disagreeing; above 3 signifies agreement with the statement; below 3 signifies disagreement.

##### ***5.2.1.1 Positive attitudes to e-learning***

Positive attitudes to e-learning were shown both in the positively and negatively phrased questions. Within the 24 positively phrased statements, agreement was assessed as a mean of above 3: the midpoint on the Likert scale. Fifteen statements (58%) scored within this range, all but one at T1 and T3 (this latter was at the low end of the scoring). There was little evidence of time increasing agreement with the statements. The group mean for the

strength of agreement decreased a small amount over time, from T1=3.93 to T3=3.84. This may reflect higher levels of optimism as the project began, against more realistic expectations after several years' experience. It is important to note that some of the changes to the mean were very small ( $6 \pm 0.1$ ). The results for the 15 statements are listed in Table 4.

Some of the higher standard deviations (SD) amongst the replies would reflect the more personal nature of some of the statements (satisfaction and enjoyment of the challenge), and some differences between the technical capabilities of institutions.

*Table 4: The 15 positively phrased statements that at T3 scored above 3 (neutral)*

Question Educator	mean T3	SD T3	Diff T1-T3 Mean
6. E-Learning will bring new opportunities for organizing teaching and learning.	4.86	0.38	-0.02
21. It is essential that e-learning material is of high quality.	4.86	0.38	-0.02
15. E-Learning increases the flexibility of teaching and learning.	4.57	0.53	0.32
10. E-Learning increases access to education and training.	4.43	0.53	0.55
12. E-Learning enables collaborative learning.	3.86	0.38	-0.27
43. Using e-learning brings me personal satisfaction.	3.86	1.46	-0.02
45. I get good technical support.	3.86	1.21	0.11
40. I enjoy the intellectual challenge.	3.71	1.25	0.09
8. There are unlimited possibilities of e-learning that have not yet been thought about.	3.57	0.79	-0.18
44. I have good access to technology to support e-learning in my workplace.	3.57	1.13	-0.18
42. I am able to access training on e-learning.	3.43	1.72	0.05
14. E-Learning increases quality of teaching and learning because it integrates all forms of media, e.g. print, audio, video.	3.29	0.76	-0.84
41. I am well supported by good e-learning infrastructure (hardware and software).	3.29	1.50	-0.21
22. Open universities should adopt more and more of e-learning.	3.29	1.11	-0.09
17. E-Learning enhances the pedagogic value of a course.	3.14	0.90	0.27

The 'negative' statements were reverse scored, so that a mean of below 3 indicated disagreement with the statement. Looking at these 26 statements, a larger number (17 – 71%) scored a mean of  $<3$ . There was more shifting of opinion amongst these replies. The average group mean at T1 was 2.54, dropping by T3 to 2.13. The SD for these replies was slightly higher than for the 'positive' statements. The results for the 17 statements are shown in Table 5.

*Table 5: The 17 negatively phrased questions which respondents disagreed with:*

Question Educator	mean T3	SD T3	Diff Mean T1-T3
25. There is poor Internet access and networking in the university.	1.14	0.38	-0.86
29. I have inadequate availability of hardware and software.	1.43	0.79	-0.95
26. There is a lack of technical support in the university.	1.57	0.79	-0.30
19. E-Learning is not effective for student learning.	1.71	0.76	0.21
2. E-Learning makes me uncomfortable because I do not understand it.	1.71	1.11	-0.41
5. I feel intimidated by e-learning.	1.71	0.76	-1.04
28. There is a lack of institutional policy for e-learning.	2.29	1.50	0.41
33. I lack incentives to use e-learning.	2.29	1.11	0.16
18. I get a sinking feeling when I think of trying to use e-learning for my courses.	2.29	0.95	-0.09
3. E-Learning is a de-humanizing process of learning.	2.29	1.38	-0.34
7. E-Learning is difficult to handle and therefore frustrating to use.	2.43	0.79	-0.32
36. I am intimidated by technology.	2.43	1.62	-0.45
34. I am concerned about security issues on Internet.	2.43	1.27	-0.70
35 .Developing e-learning does not bring me credit towards promotion.	2.43	1.62	-1.07
23. I am concerned about access to e-learning for students.	2.57	1.13	-0.30
27. There is a lack of support to help me with the design of e-learning.	2.71	1.70	-0.29
24. I lack training on e-learning.	2.71	0.76	-0.79

#### *5.2.1.2 Negative attitudes to e-learning*

Within the positively phrased questions, two had a mean of 3 at T3 (neutral) while 9 scored below 3, indicating that there was some disagreement with the positive statement. This was strongest in relation to the question of whether e-learning saves time. Questions on whether e-learning enhances prestige and helps towards promotion also scored poorly, although the SD was slightly higher here, indicating the differences between institutions and individuals. It may be worth noting that opinion had shifted downwards to some extent in all but one of these questions, which in itself was a neutral response with no change in mean from T1-T3. The 11 statements in question are shown in Table 6.

*Table 6: The 11 positively phrased statements that at T3 scored at 3 (neutral) or below*

Question Educator	mean T3	SD T3	Diff Mean T1-T3
11. E-Learning will increase my efficiency in teaching.	3.00	1.15	-0.75
39. I have a strong personal interest in using technology.	3.00	1.29	0.00
16. E-Learning improves communication between students and teachers.	2.71	1.11	-0.16
46. I like to be a trendsetter by early adoption of e-learning.	2.57	0.98	-0.18
48. There are strong professional incentives for me to use e-learning.	2.43	1.27	-0.57
13. E-Learning can engage learners more than other forms of learning.	2.43	1.13	-0.20
4. E-Learning can solve a lot of our educational problems.	2.43	0.53	-0.07
50. Using e-learning brings me peer recognition, prestige and status.	2.29	1.25	-0.46
49. Using e-learning gets me credit towards promotion.	1.86	1.21	-0.89
9. E-Learning saves time and effort of both teachers and students.	1.71	0.76	-0.04
47. Using e-learning can release time/bring about a reduction in my existing workload.	1.57	1.13	-0.80

Within the negatively phrased questions, one had a mean of 3 at T3 (neutral) while 6 scored above 3, indicating that there was some agreement with the negative statement. This was strongest again in relationship to time, in this case related to faculty time and workload. The 7 statements in question are shown in Table 7.

*Table 7: The 7 negatively phrased statements that at T3 scored at 3 (neutral) or above*

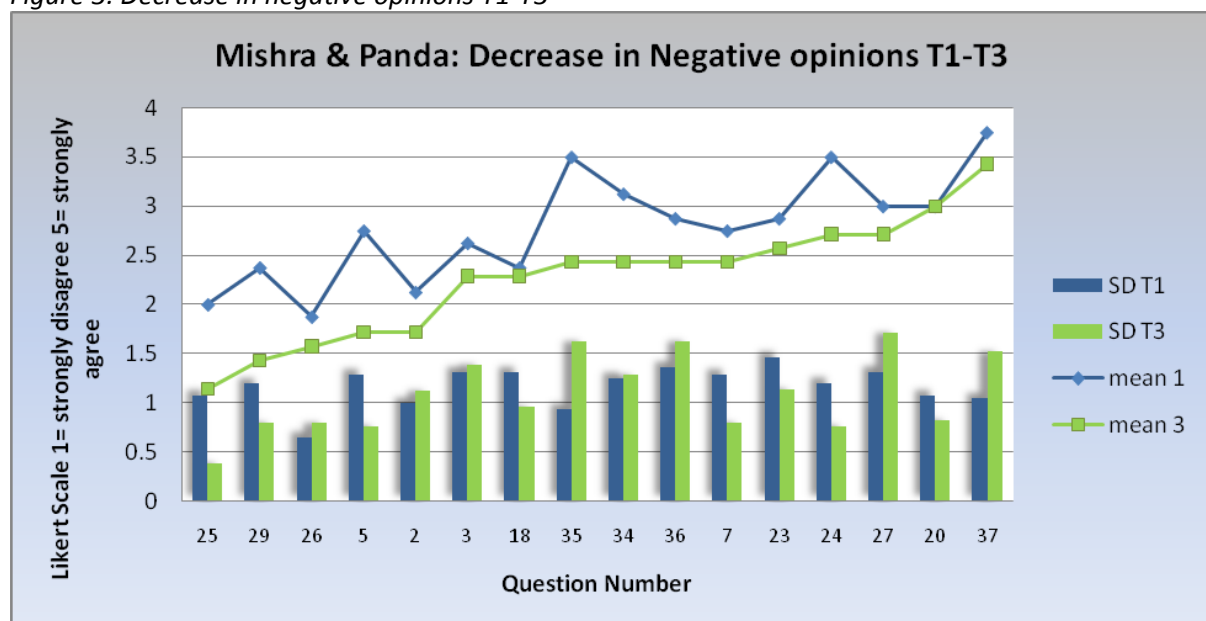
Question Educator	Mean T3	SD T3	Diff Mean T1-T3
20. E-Learning experiences cannot be equated with face to face teaching or even distance education.	3.00	0.82	0.00
32. I am concerned about the quality of e-courses.	3.14	1.07	0.02
38. There is no professional prestige attached to e-learning.	3.29	1.38	0.54
37. I have no role models to follow.	3.43	1.51	-0.32
1. E-Learning will never replace other forms of teaching and learning.	3.71	1.50	0.84
30. I am concerned about faculty workload.	4.43	0.98	0.80
31. I lack time to develop e-courses.	4.43	0.53	0.18

#### 5.2.1.3 Improvement and worsening of opinions over time

Of the 'negative' group of questions, 15 showed an improvement, that is, agreement with the statement decreased between T1 and T3. The effect range however was very small: -0.09 to -1.07. One further statement showed no movement.

The Standard Deviations (SD) are shown against these in the Figure 3 below. It is important to bear in mind that a mean below 3 (the median – neutral point) indicates a leaning towards disagreeing with the statement. In the case of these negative statements, that is a good result. All but two of the questions (20, 37) had a mean of below 3 by T3, although the SD shows a wide spread of opinion describing those means.

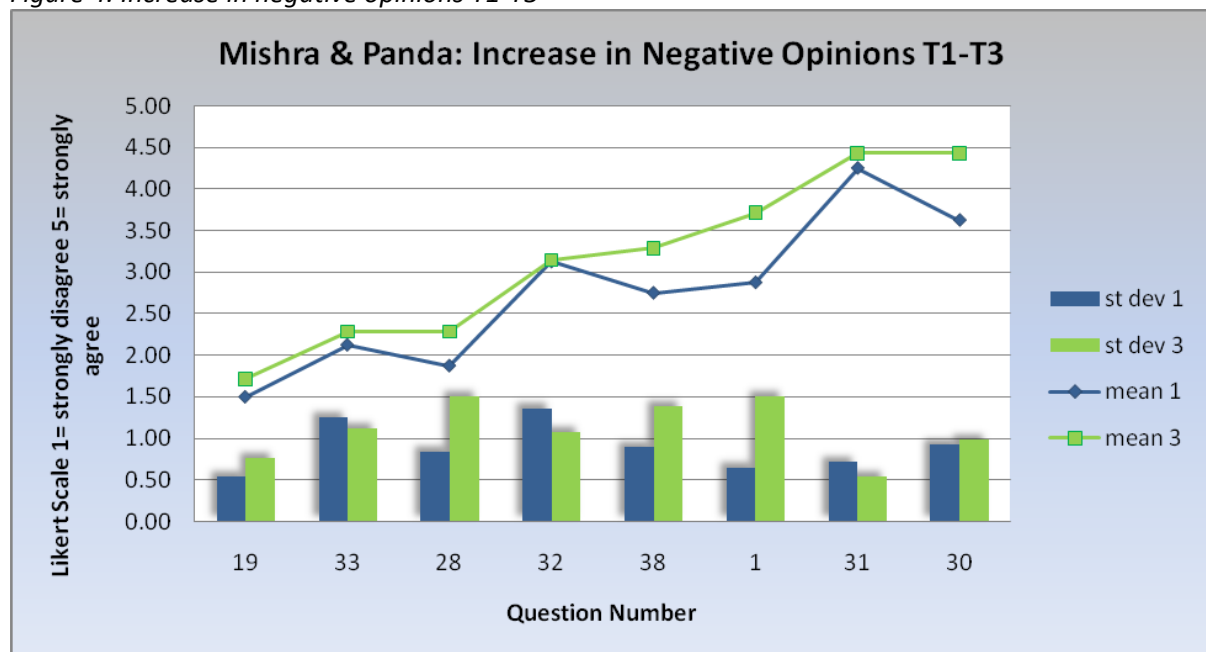
*Figure 3: Decrease in negative opinions T1-T3*



- 25. There is poor Internet access and networking in the university.
- 29. I have inadequate availability of hardware and software.
- 26. There is a lack of technical support in the university.
- 5. I feel intimidated by e-learning.
- 2. E-Learning makes me uncomfortable because I do not understand it.
- 3. E-Learning is a de-humanizing process of learning.
- 18. I get a sinking feeling when I think of trying to use e-learning for my courses.
- 35. Developing e-learning does not bring me credit towards promotion.
- 34. I am concerned about security issues on Internet.
- 36. I am intimidated by technology.
- 7. E-Learning is difficult to handle and therefore frustrating to use.
- 23. I am concerned about access to e-learning for students.
- 24. I lack training on e-learning.
- 27. There is a lack of support to help me with the design of e-learning.
- 20. E-Learning experiences cannot be equated with face to face teaching or even distance education.
- 37. I have no role models to follow.

Eight of the negatively phrased statements, as shown in Figure 4 below, had an increase to their means over T1-T3, showing that opinions about these aspects of working with e-learning had worsened. Nonetheless, three of these still remained below the neutral point (3).

Figure 4: Increase in negative opinions T1-T3

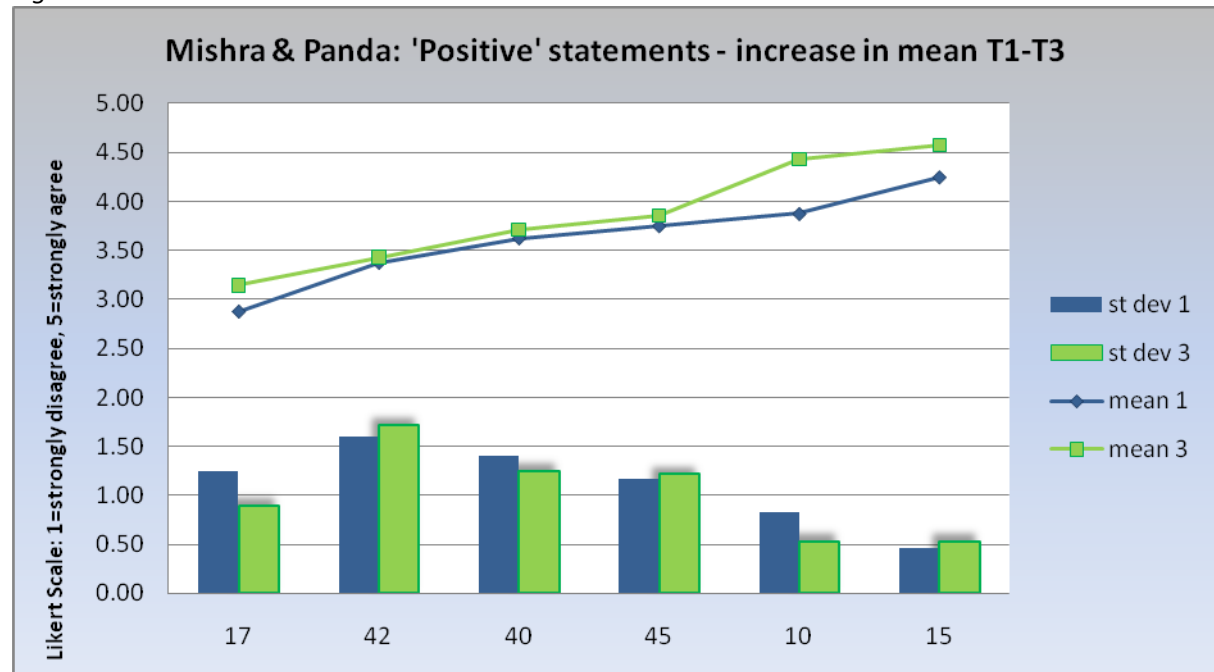


- 19. E-Learning is not effective for student learning.
- 33. I lack incentives to use e-learning.
- 28. There is a lack of institutional policy for e-learning.
- 32. I am concerned about the quality of e-courses.
- 38. There is no professional prestige attached to e-learning.
- 1. E-Learning will never replace other forms of teaching and learning.
- 31. I lack time to develop e-courses.
- 30. I am concerned about faculty workload.



The positive statements showed an increase in 6 cases (23%), shown in Figure 5 below, although these were mostly small increases. All but one were aspects with which people had agreed to some extent at the start of the project. SD decreased as agreement increased across these questions.

Figure 5: Positive statements – increase in mean T1-T3



17. E-Learning enhances the pedagogic value of a course.

42. I am able to access training on e-learning.

40. I enjoy the intellectual challenge.

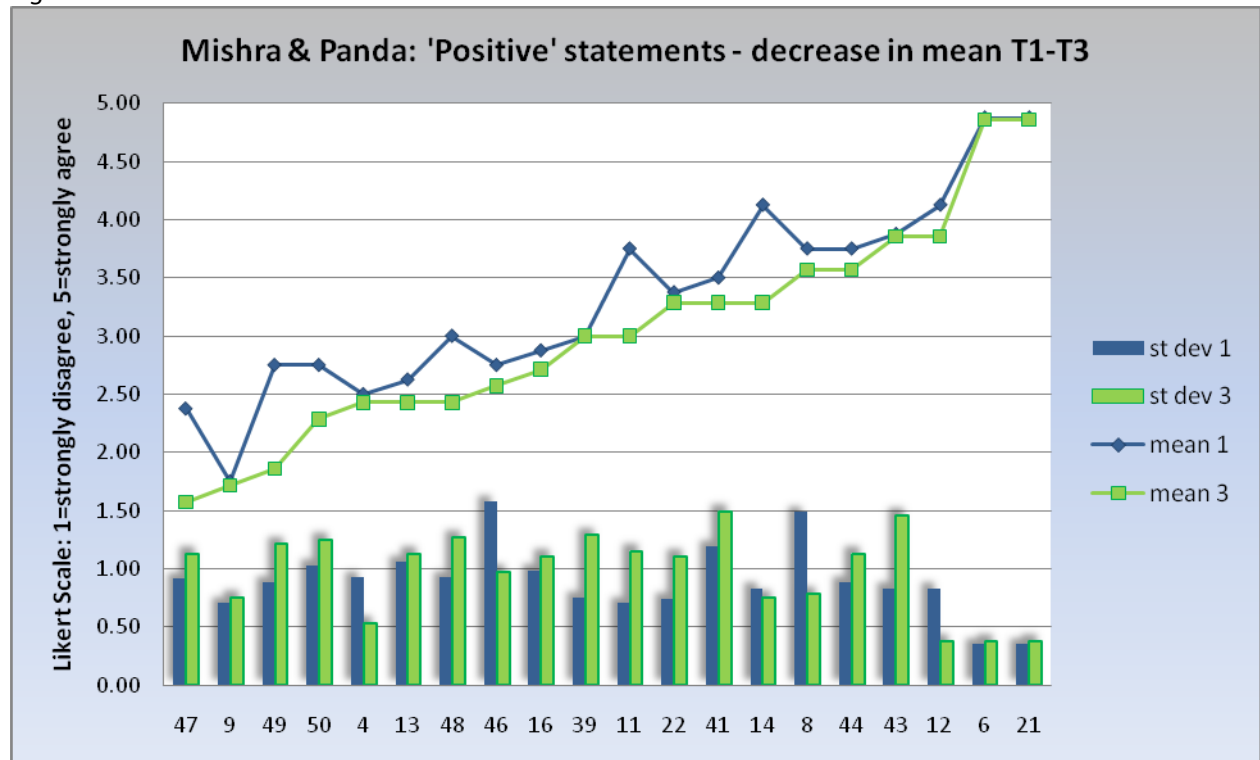
45. I get good technical support.

10. E-Learning increases access to education and training.

15. E-Learning increases the flexibility of teaching and learning.

Within the positively phrased questions, there was more of a tendency to decrease the mean over time. As shown in Figure 6, 19 (73%) of the positive statements showed a downturn in opinion from T1-T3, although in some cases this was very small (6 were  $<-0.1$ ). One question (4%) maintained a neutral position over time. It is interesting to note, again, that the SD was lowest at the top end of the scale, where agreement was highest.

Figure 6: Positive statements – decrease in mean T1-T3



47. Using e-learning can release time/bring about a reduction in my existing workload.

9. E-Learning saves time and effort of both teachers and students.

49. Using e-learning gets me credit towards promotion.

50. Using e-learning brings me peer recognition, prestige and status.

4. E-Learning can solve a lot of our educational problems.

13. E-Learning can engage learners more than other forms of learning.

48. There are strong professional incentives for me to use e-learning.

46. I like to be a trendsetter by early adoption of e-learning.

16. E-Learning improves communication between students and teachers.

39. I have a strong personal interest in using technology.

11. E-Learning will increase my efficiency in teaching.

22. Open universities should adopt more and more of e-learning.

41. I am well supported by good e-learning infrastructure (hardware and software).

14. E-Learning increases quality of teaching and learning because it integrates all forms of media, e.g. print, audio, video.

8. There are unlimited possibilities of e-learning that have not yet been thought about.

44. I have good access to technology to support e-learning in my workplace.

43. Using e-learning brings me personal satisfaction.

12. E-Learning enables collaborative learning.

6. E-Learning will bring new opportunities for organizing teaching and learning.

21. It is essential that e-learning material is of high quality.

## 5.2.2 Orientation to the use of computers and e-learning in education (Liaw et al educator questionnaire)

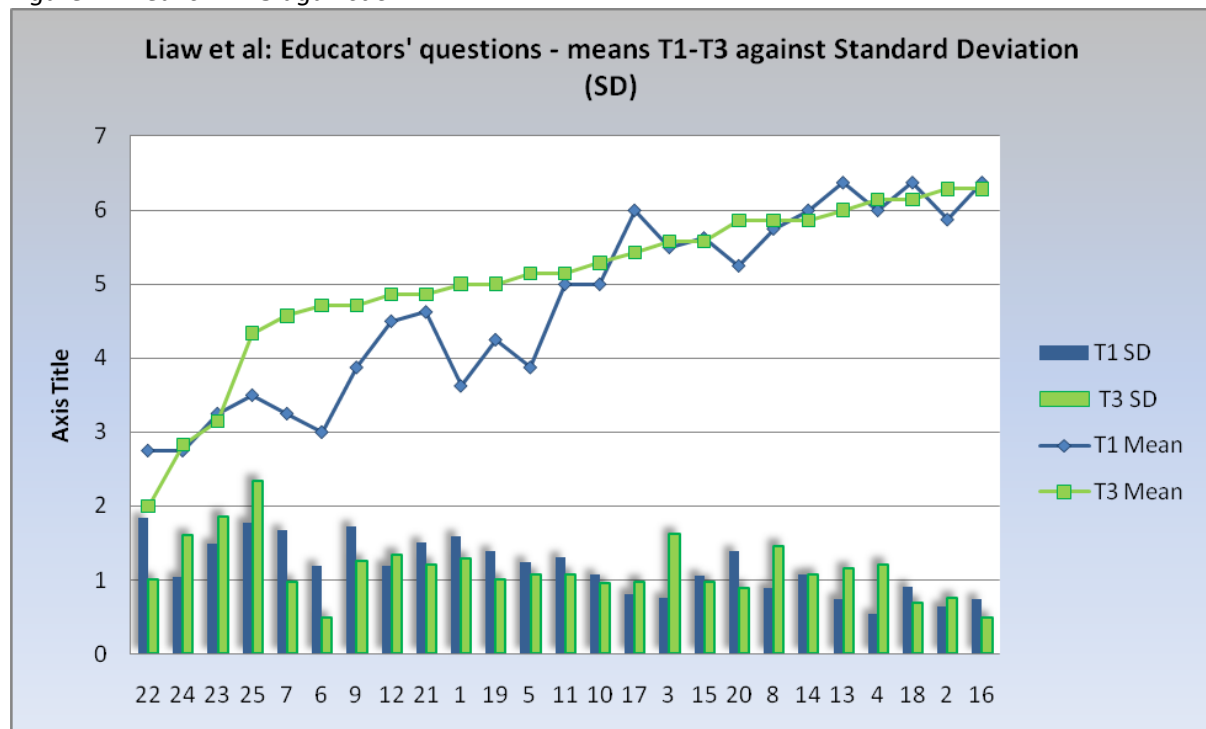
### 5.2.2.1 Experience, intentions and beliefs in e-learning

The 25 educators' questions taken from Liaw et al measured both experience of using IT systems and the degree to which educators liked e-learning and e-learning tools. Responses were measured using a 7 point Likert Scale, identified as ranging from 1='no experience' to 7='very experienced'<sup>5</sup>.

There was a general improvement in scores as measured through their means, using 4 as the mid point above which a reply could be considered 'positive'. Whilst at the start of the e-learning project nine questions measured below 4 (36%), after the intervention only three of the means were below 4 (12%).

Standard Deviation was highest across the lower means, peaking at 2.34 for the statement 'I like to use colourful text media instruction'. All the 'I like' statements scored the lowest means, in three cases with high SDs, which may demonstrate some indifference to the graphics and look of the e-learning objects, but also, as the last statements on the list, may show an effect of 'questionnaire fatigue'. It is interesting to note that while all the responses around using e-learning and the internet to teach scored highly, these were also areas where there were small drops in the means from T1 to T3. These results are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Means T1-T3 against SD



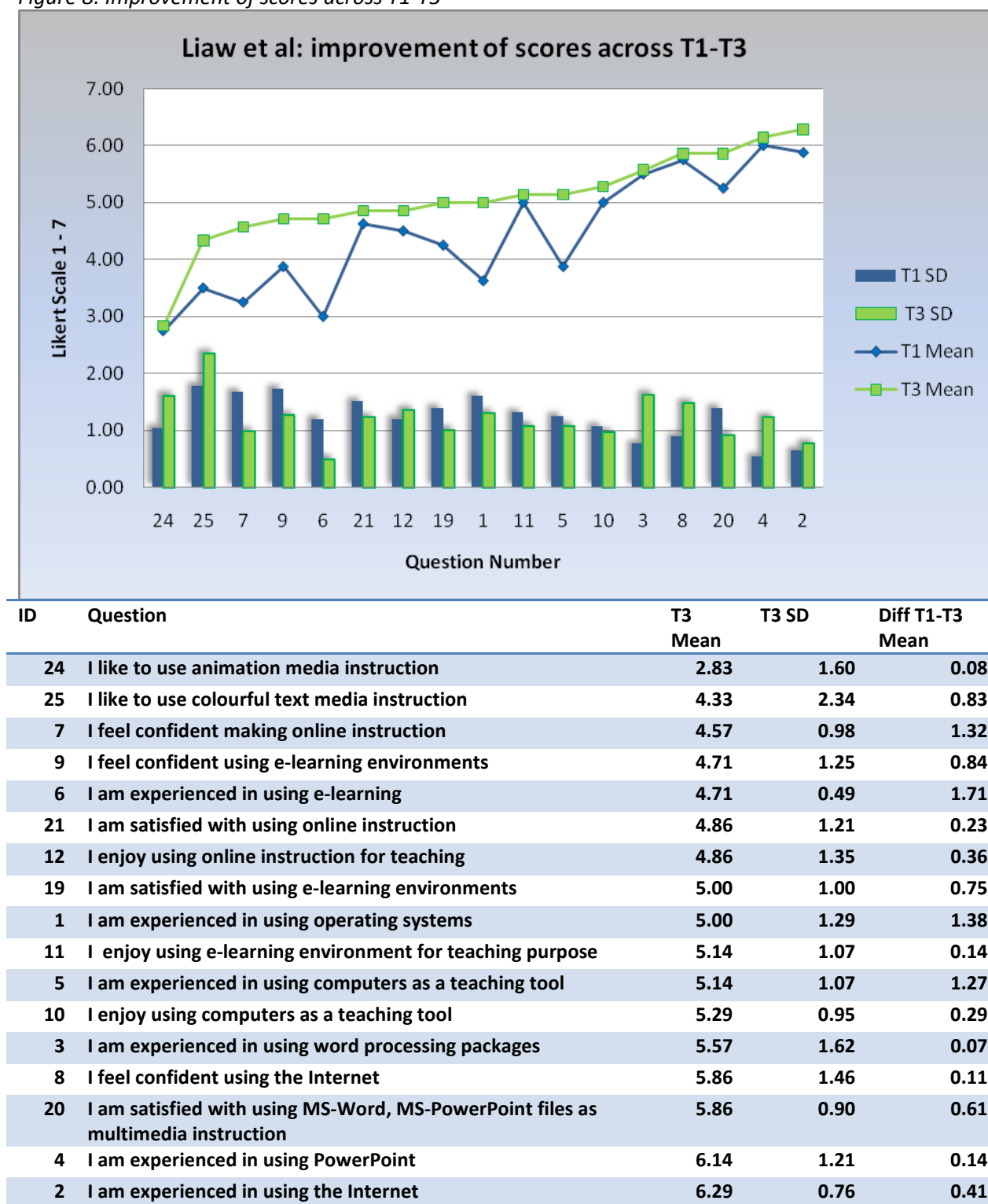
<sup>5</sup> Although 'experience' was only being measured for the first 4 questions, the educators were able to take a practical approach to using the scale for the other questions.

	Question	T3 Mean	T3 SD	Diff T1-T3 Mean
22	I like to use voice media instruction	2.00	1.00	-0.75
24	I like to use animation media instruction	2.83	1.60	0.08
23	I like to use image media instruction	3.14	1.86	-0.11
25	I like to use colourful text media instruction	4.33	2.34	0.83
7	I feel confident making online instruction	4.57	0.98	1.32
6	I am experienced in using e-learning	4.71	0.49	1.71
9	I feel confident using e-learning environments	4.71	1.25	0.84
12	I enjoy using online instruction for teaching	4.86	1.35	0.36
21	I am satisfied with using online instruction	4.86	1.21	0.23
1	I am experienced in using operating systems	5.00	1.29	1.38
19	I am satisfied with using e-learning environments	5.00	1.00	0.75
5	I am experienced in using computers as a teaching tool	5.14	1.07	1.27
11	I enjoy using e-learning environment for teaching purpose	5.14	1.07	0.14
10	I enjoy using computers as a teaching tool	5.29	0.95	0.29
17	I intend to use online instruction to assist my teaching	5.43	0.98	-0.57
3	I am experienced in using word processing packages	5.57	1.62	0.07
15	I believe using online instruction is useful for teaching	5.57	0.98	-0.05
20	I am satisfied with using MS-Word, MS-PowerPoint files as multimedia instruction	5.86	0.90	0.61
8	I feel confident using the Internet	5.86	1.46	0.11
14	I believe using e-learning environments is helpful for teaching	5.86	1.07	-0.14
13	I believe using e-learning environments is helpful for learning	6.00	1.15	-0.38
4	I am experienced in using PowerPoint	6.14	1.21	0.14
18	I intend to use the Internet to assist my teaching	6.14	0.69	-0.23
2	I am experienced in using the Internet	6.29	0.76	0.41
16	I intend to use e-learning to assist my teaching	6.29	0.49	-0.09

#### 5.2.2.2 Increase and decrease in means from T1 to T3

Seventeen of the Liaw et al statements had an improvement in the means between T1 and T3, as shown in Figure 8. The top four of these were to do with experiences of using e-learning and multimedia. The highest increase was (perhaps unsurprisingly) 'I am experienced in using e-learning', where the mean moved from 3 to 4.71 (movement of 1.71). Standard deviation for this question was at its lowest for T3 (SD=0.49).

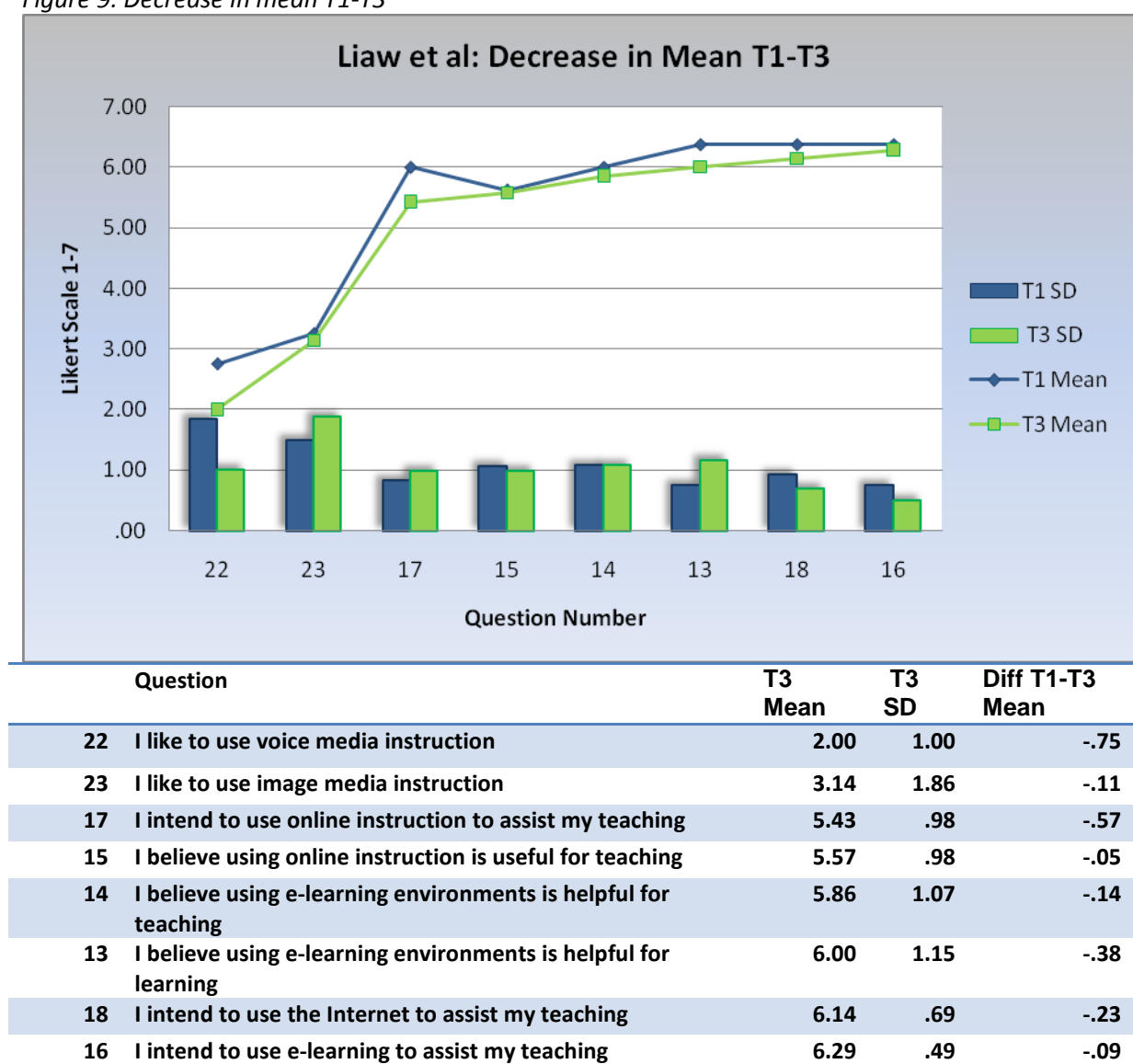
Figure 8: Improvement of scores across T1-T3



Eight (32%) of the responses showed a decrease in their means between T1 and T3, (shown in Figure 9). The largest of these (0.71) was at the low end of the scale: 'I like to use voice media instruction'. In contrast, at the top end of the scale a very small decrease (0.09) showed only a minor change to the statement 'I intend to use e-learning to assist my

teaching'. There was small standard deviation between replies at T3 (0.49) which indicates the general strength of this reply.

Figure 9: Decrease in mean T1-T3



### 5.2.2.3 Summary of changes

Thus the data show there were some increases in experience of and confidence in using e-learning. Changes of belief in the utility of e-learning are less apparent, but the learning set was composed of people who, by definition, were interested and had some belief in the potential efficacy of e-learning. Whilst these positive beliefs by and large endured, what changed was confidence. This was not, however, always accompanied by increased satisfaction with and enjoyment of the use of e-learning made by educators. It is likely that exposure to the complexities, both pedagogic and practical, of embedding the learning objects in a blended learning approach provoked more self critical appraisal of satisfaction levels later in the project.

The extension of some aspects of the project for the academic year 2010-2011 will give another opportunity to take a final (Time 4) measure, at which point educators will be asked also to provide a retrospective revisiting of their first response, in the light of the knowledge and experience they now have. This will enable adjustment to any possibly over estimation of capacity and confidence in the early stages of the study.

### **5.3 Educators' reflections on the learning set experience<sup>6</sup>**

The in-depth interviews with the educators which took place during the final full year of the 2½ year study, at the point at which the educator had completed the second iteration of law teaching incorporating the e-learning objects, provided a rich source of data on experiences of teaching law, the experience of participating in the learning set, and experiences of using the SCIE law e-learning resources in teaching. Where appropriate in the account that follows, those expressed views have been amplified through reference also to reflective diary entries and learning set transcripts.

#### **5.3.1 Teaching law**

Learning set members were experienced in teaching law to social work students. By the time of the interviews, they had been teaching law for between two and twenty years. For some this had been an active choice but for others it was a case that *"there's no-one else"* (HEI 4) and *"other lecturers have a mental block on law"* (HEI 2). This theme of isolation, which for one member (HEI 4) had been compounded because staff from health care programmes teaching law to nurses had not responded to their request for links, had repercussions when they had sought to widen the teaching of social work law across whole programmes. Learning set members were clear that law should permeate all the teaching and assessment on a social work programme, including practice learning, but had not always been successful in establishing this principle. So, in some universities law still stood alone, and this proved a barrier when encouraging students to see that the law has to be applied in conjunction with other aspects of the curriculum.

For all, even where none of their colleagues had been willing to engage with teaching the subject, law was an area of interest about which they were *"passionate"*. This positive view of the subject, and its relative isolation within their social work staff groups, was also one of the principal motivating factors in joining the learning set.

The challenge of establishing the links between law and social work practice was a theme that ran through the interviews with set members.

*... thinking about the feedback and the evaluations that I've had from students for the last few years, it's been about what they perceive as my ability to give them some real life examples from my practice and from the practice of others. And actually to*

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<sup>6</sup> In reporting on the educators' views, each HEI is referred to by a number; numbers have been allocated in random sequence (not alphabetical) in order to preserve confidentiality between educator members of the learning set.

*be abreast with it, just so that students feel that they're interacting with law and legal (practitioners) every day (HEI 6).*

*... what's been effective is having practitioners in who talk about what it's like and can relate it to cases right down to the detail of where are you sitting when that phone call came in, who did you speak to first, what time of the morning was that, how quickly did you go out, what did you do next, how many days did it take before the case was moved on or closed, when you took that child into care what did that look like? ... I've always thought (law is one of the) difficult subjects for students and you have to use a whole range of methods really (HEI 3).*

One member referred to the need to counter student expectations that law was a handful of sections and help them to learn how to find out what they needed to know in any given practice situation. It was also about *"giving them a sense of what practice looks like"* (HEI 2). For another the purpose of social work law modules was *"to get students working in different ways and thinking ... to get them engaged with the material"* (HEI 3). Similar sentiments or ambitions were expressed by others. Teaching sessions were focused on *"trying to keep it related very much to practice"* and *"really trying to get students to apply the law, rather than just teaching law"* (HEI 1), as well as *"helping students to understand how interpretation of law links to the human condition"* (HEI 5).

Educators responded to this challenge by using a variety of teaching methods.

*They haven't got the practice experience so it is really, really hard and I think I probably have unconsciously, because of that, used more case study material (from named text). You might not ... you won't understand them all because it uses everything and it brings in every aspect, but just to familiarise yourself with the fact that here's a story that's not uncommon and this is all the elements of the law that could apply. So I think I've looked more actively for materials where they can apply it whereas before [the undergraduate degree qualification] they could draw more on experience, yes definitely (HEI 1).*

Despite the perceived importance of application to practice, however, most programmes represented in the learning set were not yet explicitly assessing student competence in applying social work law in the live practice environment.

In terms of teaching approaches, there was considerable emphasis, alongside lectures, on outside speakers from practice, tutors' own practice experiences and anecdotes, case studies, workbooks, group discussion, court visits and online tasks, including the SCIE law e-learning objects. Sometimes tasks would be set in advance, with students then reporting back on their work. One set member had changed their teaching practice away from simply giving lectures to a more blended learning approach, including the use of case studies, reusable learning objects and directed learning tasks, in recognition of students' different learning styles, a theme also fore-grounded by students. The use of varied methods was seen as helping students to discover *"how people learn how they want to learn"* (HEI 4).



Using mixed teaching methods was also regarded as a way of “helping students to get over their fears” (HEI 2), and of counteracting received and deep-rooted images of law as “dry” (HEI 5) and “not social work” (HEI 6). Students’ fear is a recurring theme, recognised by staff and fore-grounded also by students. Set members (and indeed students) emphasised the importance of teachers being creative, bringing law alive, and promoting interaction with the subject. This combination of recognising what students might bring to their law learning, and how staff might respond, is captured well in the following quote.

*They had a fear of the word law and it was kind of an inertia that they experienced. They were so terrified that they came into the module with an anticipation it was going to be horrible. I took it on as my responsibility to try and change that and to try and turn it around and flare people’s imagination, interest and passion in it by tapping into what they’ve got to bring to social work. So that’s the way I attack it really, by trying to talk about the values and the spirit of the law, alongside the legal rules, rather than one or the other (HEI 5).*

Two further themes emerge from interviews with set members relating to the challenges of teaching social work law. They are time and timing. The theme of time is addressed in the following quote, which also reiterates the theme of application in practice discussed earlier:

*It’s complicated because you’ve got the actual legislation, this is what it says, but then you’ve got the whole reality of it and the interpretation of it and what it means in practice and how it’s applied in practice, and I think the students start with looking at the former, this is what the Children Act says, and my job is to get them to the end of the latter which is that they’ve understood how does it or does it protect children, what are the implications of it, and that’s quite a journey in (a few) weeks for people to make with a lot of detail and understanding, and it’s very difficult in finding good law text books, for example, that can do both (HEI3).*

The challenge of covering considerable ground within one module, when students “have so little experience” (HEI 6), and when law “is complex” and involves “material that they’ve not engaged with before” (HEI 3), meant that students struggled and pressed for information and knowledge with lecturers who wanted to prioritise dialogue and broader engagement with the material.

*I think when they think of law, they think that it’s memorisation, but it’s not. I think it’s difficult to get them to engage and actually critique and come up with their own ideas versus just coming in and getting information from me (HEI 3).*

The use of case study material might be intended to overcome students’ lack of experience but, even so, with very limited practice experience, set members had had the experience of students responding to “some of the stuff that I draw upon ... (by) staring blankly at me” (HEI 6). In such a context, it could prove challenging to motivate students to study the subject broadly:

*"It takes at least the first (few) weeks for them to actually understand the role of a social worker within [law]. They just don't see it. For them law and legal intervention is all about the police, it's the criminal side of things" (HEI 6).*

Indeed, one lecturer captures this theme succinctly:

*So much in so little time. The main challenge is not giving them too much and frightening them away. [Another challenge is] getting sufficient information across without overwhelming them at this level of their learning because the level one students, they haven't yet gone out on placement so they haven't got something to hang their hat on and link it to in terms of reality. So it's getting a balance between offering them a sense of reality by giving them some case context if you like, and giving them a basis for going out, a catalyst for going out for themselves and wanting and making a decision to study for themselves (HEI 5).*

Linked to this time pressure, coupled with fear of the subject and lack of practice experience, were the variable degrees of receptivity that students were perceived to bring to their law learning. This is demonstrated in the following quotations.

*It's getting the balance between those that are eager for information, eager to want to learn and those that are surface driven really ... that's one of the main challenges, to inspire people to want to dig deeper for themselves. Sometimes I feel that some students just so want a degree, but they don't want the journey (HEI 5).*

*[After the law module] they feel "It's finished now, something else". I'm just trying to get them to see that they can use it. I think this cohort are a bit more receptive to using it on placement, whether it's just them, I'm not sure what I did different, I'm just trying to think what I did differently this time, but they're a bit more, "Oh yeah we'll use it, we will" so hopefully that will work (HEI 6).*

*Well it is applying it. It's getting them to move beyond saying 'this is what this Act says, this is what that Act says' and to get them to think of it as a working tool. It underpins everything they do but it's like a tool and I find that a challenge because I think they get really hung up on what they need to know (HEI 1).*

The pressure of time could also be experienced by lecturers in relation to their own preparation. Time *"to keep up to date"* and *"to develop blended learning"* (HEI 4) was highlighted as a challenge, which for several set members also included overcoming technical hurdles in their universities.

The theme of timing, implicit in the above discussion, explicitly emerges in the observation that the curriculum frequently timetables law learning and assessment in the beginning year of social work education, furthest away from practice learning and the opportunity to test out knowledge and understanding in practice. The following quotations capture this point well:

*[The] majority of our law teaching is in the first year and that's the most difficult year to apply it. So the other side of the success question is if they can take that through with them and find that it is useful. We do have students feeding back saying that when they've qualified they're still using their law file, so I suppose that's a tiny bit of a success (HEI 1).*

Students' lack of experience at the time law teaching takes place raises challenges for assessment:

*I think the other challenge is how to assess the module, because we do it by exam and I know lots of people have done it by exam, and one of the good things about the learning set has been finding out how other people assess... But I still find ... I still feel that assessing it is a real challenge and I don't know what you do about that ... some people put it into an assignment but if it's at level one and they haven't got heaps of experience, I think that's quite hard to do as well really (HEI 1).*

*When they incorporate things into assignments at level two and at level three and they're starting to contextualise their placement stuff with the framework of the law, you can see it's making more sense and then it's easier to assess really (HEI 1).*

Another set member also referred to the timing of teaching law. They too commented that actual work experience assists students to grasp law teaching in the academic curriculum but in this university, as elsewhere amongst learning set members, links to practice placements were tenuous. Law did not figure explicitly in this programme's placement portfolio requirements or in practice assessment. They also contrasted how they had been "eased into work and good practice" (HEI 2) post qualification with the induction processes available now. They also noted that legal rules were sometimes not followed by teams.

A final theme to emerge from discussion of law teaching, which also parallels the students' experience, is confidence. For educators, developing confidence allowed them to adopt different methods of delivering teaching, including using e-learning, and engage with students at different levels within qualifying and post-qualifying training. As one summarised it: "it's having the confidence to think, well, I don't need to stand up for three hours" (HEI 4).

### *5.3.2 Building collaborative capacity for e-learning in social work education: the experience of the learning set*

Learning set members joined the learning set for a variety of, and often overlapping, reasons. A keen interest in the relationship between law and social work was often key, both for those who had been teaching social work law for some time and for those who wanted to meet lecturers who had greater experience. The set provided an opportunity for new and experienced lecturers alike to develop a knowledge base and to share a research experience.

Another motivation for joining was a sense of e-learning as a significant part of the future for social work education. Two members talked about the learning set as providing the time and space to learn more about e-learning and how to use it.

*Because I had been involved in their early development and wanted to continue with that. The reason I got involved and have had an interest in it is I think there's huge potential and we do need different ways and different media, and I think that students are online much more and that's the way to go (HEI 3).*

*There's so much pressure on the universities themselves to use e-learning, to use distant learning (HEI 4).*

Alongside this motivation was a sense that the learning set would provide encouragement, a chance to reflect on approaches to teaching social work law and an opportunity to experiment.

*I should use e-learning resources much more and thought this would be a great opportunity to have a go and make a start and try and do more than just use (the VLE) as a kind of dumping ground for materials (HEI 3).*

*It is like finding different ways of teaching it because it is so important and you do want it to kind of be engaging and you do want to sort of think well how can I assess this in different ways? So I also did think I've been doing it a long time but in many ways how much have I changed in my delivery? Although I've always looked at how I've taught the module and have changed over the years, I still think one tends to and I tend to probably, sort of get slightly stuck even though you always have to revisit your material, but whether you revisit the way that you deliver it ... the thought of meeting different people and thinking how do they do it, I think that was a motivator as well (HEI 1).*

*I knew I had a kind of fear of technology and I wanted to overcome that and I knew that online learning was becoming something very current and key and I needed to address that rather than stay in an archaic frame of mind in relation to teaching and learning (HEI 5).*

For others the motivation was derived in part from experience of beginning to use the internet coupled with a real sense of isolation, a passion for the subject and a wish to learn from others.

*I wanted to learn from people as well and that's what I wanted, to understand about, you know, how to use e-learning but also just generally about what other people do and what other people are teaching ... it was trying to link with different people (HEI 4).*

*I love the law and I think I'm quite passionate about it and it's almost like I think if you're enthusiastic about something, you want everybody else to be don't you? And*

*so the thought of joining a learning set where I might meet other people who were ... because I find although everybody thinks in the team it's important, I don't think they have that same element of thinking how important ... well not just how important but even how enjoyable it might be ... (HEI 1).*

*... you can become quite insular and I so wanted to link up with colleagues from other places to seek some kind of reassurance and consolidation for myself really that what was lacking within the support networks within my own university I could find elsewhere, that we were a wider community and I wanted to be part of that community (HEI 5).*

For some the process of joining and being in the learning set was challenging because of a lack of confidence in themselves as researchers and as subject specialists. Set members did, however, find a balance, believing that what they had to contribute was their enthusiasm and their experience of social work and of law.

*Difficult, I think it's quite daunting because I think I felt in awe of people I have to work with, I don't feel very confident around them in the growth sense because I haven't any research previous to that sort of thing. But the session that we had with John Carpenter went totally over my head, I have to be honest because I'm new to it, it's new to me so it's that level of practice and then I think it's having the confidence to understand the evaluation (HEI 4).*

*At the onset of the experience I didn't think I had anything to contribute. I thought I didn't have sufficient insight and knowledge and experience to be of value to a group of colleagues with such a lot, and I was quite in awe of that really. The more I look now, I suppose what I feel I can contribute, my experience here really; my enthusiasm and passion for the subject (HEI 5).*

The withdrawal of a seventh university from the learning set proved temporarily disruptive for some members but ultimately not de-stabilising. One member would have liked the set to have met more often, the frequency contributing to a lack of momentum at times. They also found a little disorientating the fact that members were teaching law at different times during the academic year and so were at different stages when the group met.

Not everyone's expectations of the learning set were met for a variety of reasons ranging from resources available within a university, including the reliability and range of technology, to lack of confidence, pressures of time and reliance on tried and tested, established approaches to the curriculum.

*I haven't done anything else in terms of developing my teaching other than using [VLE]. I'm also really disappointed with the degree to which I've been able to integrate the objects into the teaching as well, and had expected that I would be able to make more and better use of them and therefore students would make more and better use of them and it would be a real addition. And I don't think that it's done that for various reasons ... I think first of all time - it's much easier at the start of the*

*semester to just do what you've done before, and so you have to set aside more time and dedicate time to developing teaching your unit in a way that is different. Then you run the risk of course that it's going to all go horribly wrong, so instead of using tried and tested methods you're going to do something else, and you know that when you've done that in the past it's been worth it. So you have to kind of go with that. I've tried to do that a bit so I got hold of the discs [containing the e-learning objects] at the beginning of when I was doing the preparation for the unit and I thought I will use them live in the classroom ... So I take my laptop and PowerPoint to the lecture room and I plug in, and then I didn't really know what to do with the discs after that ... Then I kind of bottled out a bit of using it live, I thought 'no, I can't'... I'd like to try and make better use of them, I don't feel I've really got the most out of them. I don't think I have at all (HEI 3).*

Nonetheless, even when there had been disappointments, members also derived positive outcomes from attendance at the learning set, including a motivation to remain engaged with the e-learning agenda, and an appreciation of the value of collaboration.

*It has motivated me more to try and engage with it more than I might have done, so I think that's been the positive, and of course there's always a positive in meeting other people and hearing about how they're delivering their teaching and reflecting on that ... I think that it has kept me engaged with the potential for e-learning and e-learning resources, and I think that had I not been involved in the project that might have slipped away probably all together and I would have just reverted back to not thinking about it really and just using other traditional approaches. So the outcome will be that I think I'm looking for new and different ways still of engaging with e-learning for this unit, but I'm some way off. But it keeps it on the agenda for me, I think, so I think that's one outcome (HEI 3).*

In terms of learning set processes, several set members found the beginning of the learning set (the April to September 2008 period) “rushed” with insufficient “lead-in time” (HEI 2). There had been considerable variance in which social work law reusable learning objects members were using (HEI 2). In addition, the group had had to accommodate members teaching at different times which meant that people were at different points in the process when the set met.

Nonetheless, where joining and staying with the process had been difficult, it had also been beneficial. The group had offered an opportunity “to share”, which had broken down something that members felt they shared, namely “a lot of isolation” (HEI 4).

*It's been good in terms of I'm just learning now what a learning set is really and that's been an experience ... it's built my confidence in my peers ... and the learning, just the learning for me ... it's building up my confidence in terms of understanding evaluation research and it has heightened my awareness of law teaching and the complexities of it (HEI 4).*

Other set members were also able to identify what they had gained from the group in terms of learning and participation. It had enabled them to “view e-learning more positively” and to “get started”, thereby “building confidence” (HEI 2).

*I think it's been really good. I've enjoyed attending. I think the whole process of finding out from participants, their availability and going through the agenda; I think those sorts of things just make you feel included in the process, so we don't get the dates thrown at us, and I think that's a really useful process. I think the fact that it happened away from where we are is quite helpful. I mean for me, coming to London's great. I'm not at work, it's a day out, but it's also a day where I know I'm focusing on a specific thing and I won't be interrupted (HEI 5).*

Members were also clear that they had gained both enjoyment and confidence from meeting different people and experiencing colleagues giving and receiving ideas and feedback. The set meetings had been “really enjoyable” and had “felt a positive use of time”. Experience had been shared and members “had lived a research experience” (HEI 2). It had strengthened their identity as educators and specialists in social work law.

*[The] process of talking to people has also made me realise that actually I'm not as bad as I thought I might be. You know, that kind of struggle about teaching the law which I always think it shouldn't be but somehow it is. ... It isn't really a struggle in so far as we've always consistently had good feedback from the module evaluations but there's always just .... you think it's dry, even if it isn't, do you know what I mean? And I feel that process of meeting different people and being able to chat things through and talk about things, get different ideas, has been really, really good but also as I say, nobody's got the right answers or got it perfect and everybody struggles (HEI 1).*

*That motivation of wanting to learn. So you have to be prepared to give as part of that process and I think that's kind of the way it works because it was relaxed and people just shared whatever they wanted to share really. I mean ... so even if you've got 'let's all do this or let's all do that', it's not so structured ... it's not constraining, any structural bits weren't constraining (HEI 1).*

*The process and practicalities in terms of meeting for the learning set has been a bit challenging ...as somebody that's tied into a lot of things. So in an ideal world the practicalities of getting there and being part of it and getting back, and managing that, I could have perhaps done differently. Being part of that group I've gone away feeling exhausted but really fulfilled at the same time. I've gone into those meetings feeling bludgeoned by higher education and my workload and my experience here at the university to feeling almost empowered to come back and make changes. So it's been very empowering, personally empowering for me. In terms of professional identity, I went from being somebody who was known as the new girl if you like, new to teaching, lot to learn, a lot of colleagues who have got a great deal of experience and publishing experience. The footing changed when they learned that I was within the learning set as well, which gave me some credibility and professional confidence with colleagues that I felt really of value because I was part of it... the whole process*

*has been really invaluable ... I've got some kind of identity within my profession and teaching (HEI 5).*

Indeed, one set member referred to the learning set as having made them think about using e-learning as part of a teaching programme. It had helped them not to panic when the equipment malfunctioned. It had changed the nature of their teaching practice and, in so doing, raised their confidence. E-learning had become “*part of their teaching repertoire*” (HEI 1). Other members extended this to include consideration of how the objects could be used with practice assessors, as part of the practice learning curriculum, and for assessment of law knowledge. Another set member had resolved, on hearing about how others in the group had used the technology, to consider electronic methods of assessing students’ law knowledge. A quotation from this set member demonstrates the shift in their teaching practice.

*It [e-learning] would have been much more ad hoc, whereas I think one of the outcomes is that it's structured in and I think that's important really because well, ad hoc's ad hoc isn't it? ... and so now I'm sort of looking at how I can use it ... I do feel much more comfortable using it as a teaching aid and of directing students to it ... it really has made me think and made me try and move things on (HEI 1).*

Set members were clear, therefore, that one outcome of their participation was that it had changed their practice when teaching social work law. E-learning generally and the social work law e-learning objects specifically had become more embedded in the curriculum. This could mean that the objects were more embedded in the law that was taught in the classroom, with a greater variety introduced into the law learning opportunities offered to students.

*I think it's definitely clear in the module handbook. What I didn't do last year was I hadn't identified specific objects to go with the specific themes that I was teaching each week. What I've done this year is just gone through it and said, “Right, you will look at this SCIE object” and it's very much linked to that and I think that's helped. So I think the difference between that and last year was the students were left to find it for themselves and I think that's where the problem was (HEI 6).*

It could mean that their approach to teaching had changed through the experience of participating in the learning set, and could draw in a more creative, authentic and satisfying personal engagement.

*It's enabled me to take risks in my teaching. It's enabled me to not feel I've got to parrot somebody else. It's enabled me to take key texts that I maybe would have just lifted and used to using myself in the experience and making it a softer experience and not being heavily reliant upon PowerPoint. At one point I just remember (it used to be) as if my feet had stuck to the floor, I didn't move, I didn't do anything expressive, but now I like to use the space, I like to get up and down the steps, I like to get people working. The learning set was the first time I'd been given an identity as a teaching and learning practitioner that I hadn't found for myself within my own*



*university. It gave me courage that actually who I am is something that can be used, I don't have to replicate other people I've learned from. I've got something unique to bring and just relax and be yourself and bring it, and the more I'm doing that, the more I'm letting go of the PowerPoint if you like and getting into dialogue with students about what really matters. And that did change. I remember the time it changed actually, it was the very first session that we had, I came away from that group, I felt 10 foot taller when I left that group feeling that I'd actually found somewhere that I could link and identify to in relation to my profession rather than the isolated experience that teaching is with my university. The unique thing from that group has been, actually I'm not too bad, I know something, I've got a passion and I can flame the passion and there are a lot of colleagues out there that have a similar passion and that we're a community. I've gone from just focusing in legal rules to linking it to other taught modules within the university, linking it to other theoretical perspectives, value base, and pulling it together and not being afraid to take risks with that. I've gone from very dry bones ... to put flesh on it (HEI 5).*

It could mean that their approach to using the reusable learning objects was evolving through experience, becoming more embedded.

*It's becoming more streamlined ... I haven't got this tokenistic feel that I had the first year and now I feel I'm working alongside the learning objects but I want next time to work hand in glove with them. I've got to go deeper into how I'm applying them to make them of most value to people. So you've got your remit, you've got your module guide, you've got your learning outcomes and they've got the learning objects. And you've got only so much time. It's knowing how to make the most of that luxury really, so probably with hindsight on reflection of this module I will probably not use as many but spend more time with them ... and I think I can do that better by reducing the amount of learning objects I use and maybe even using the same one twice to get the most from it rather than a whistle stop of them (HEI 5).*

The change in practice could, however, arise from reflection about which students would engage and champion e-learning. One set member had resolved to check this out more explicitly as a result of discussions in the group and subsequently with students.

*... which type of student would feel more at ease with e-learning; I think that's changing, and I picked that up at the learning set as well as from my students, because I had always had this view that the younger the student, then the more experience they've had with IT and texting and all these new technologies, that that would make life a lot easier. What I've found is there is a degree of motivation and willingness to learn, which is a bit that I've never kind of included until I spoke to [another learning set member], who said, "yeah but they can text and do all that, that's fun stuff, but e-learning is serious stuff and they don't necessarily want to do that", and I hadn't actually picked up that dimension of it until she said that, but yes, I think that's one of the things, that you must be motivated to learn (HEI 6).*

Several parallel processes also emerge from the data, namely where the experience of set members mirrored those reported by students. In some programmes the social work law reusable learning objects had not been embedded fully into the curriculum. Rather, students had been encouraged to explore them in their own time. Moreover, group members were in different places with respect to their involvement in, and understanding of research, law teaching, and e-learning. Equally, the learning set did not explicitly explore members' familiarity with the objects either but rather took this for granted, as noted by one participant when asked what might have worked better for them.

*I guess if we'd have spent a bit more time thinking about the actual use of one or two of the objects and saying "okay, let's take this and let's think about how ...", so I kind of feel we were left to our own devices and that it was a sort of "this is what we'd like you to use, have a go, we'll evaluate it and we can talk about what you've done and you will bring then your experience of using it". I suppose we could have decided as a group to be more instructive with one another and said "okay, you have a go at this one and I'll have a go at this one and let's think about how we're going to do it" (HEI 3).*

*I wish we'd done an e-learning session at the beginning ... although I sort of felt like I had gone through them all and I'd read all the teaching notes and I was familiar-ish with them, we weren't all like that and that can be a bit frustrating if you're only meeting so many times (HEI 1).*

Similarly, although the focus of the set was on electronic learning, meeting face-to-face was clearly important, mirroring students' preference for direct contact with tutors. The following exchange between a set member and researcher illustrates this point.

*-... it's felt quite a sporadic experience. Fragmented in that I had to miss sessions. Having said that, email contact was very, very useful and I never felt out of the loop in relation to that, but it did feel like a sporadic treat, if you like... But that doesn't change the fact that as soon as you walk into it you've got that sense of belonging and shared commonality.*

*-But it's been contingent upon the face to face contact rather than having a group life in between?*

*-Yes, which is kind of ironic when we're looking at e-learning, isn't it (HEI 5).*

Set members had also seen a change both in their and students' confidence with e-learning and also in how they and students were using SCIE's resources more generally. The overall impact of the learning set is captured well by one member:

*The learning set has given me the space and the time to give myself permission to think outside of the box and to be more creative in my practice. Being part of the learning set, I found that being part of a group that embraced other universities within the UK and seeing the commonalties between us gave me courage to start to develop an expertise of my own. Whereas I always felt I had to travel on the back of other people's and I started to find actually, it's not just your passion because of this*

*or that, it's your passion because you really do enjoy this process. And to find other people had a similar passion, similar ideologies about student learning and student experience. So I gave myself permission to bring to the experience of teaching in this university who I am and not what I thought I should be, in terms of the law... So that's unique to it really, permission not to be a dry bone regurgitator of information. So I'd say that is a direct result of the learning set involvement (HEI 5).*

### *5.3.3 Building collaborative capacity for e-learning in social work education: the experience of using the SCIE social work law reusable learning objects*

A parallel process emerges too in the evaluation of the social work law reusable learning objects. Set members and students frequently mirror each other in the positive comments and criticisms offered. Learning set members were enthusiastic about the potential of the objects. They could be really useful in breaking up, adding variety to, or changing the pace of a teaching session.

*If you can flit backwards and forwards from the case or the issue to the legislation that's so much easier to do on a screen when you're clicking than it is to do in a textbook when you're flicking 'where was that section?' and you're flicking back through again (HEI 3).*

In particular, the positive evaluation of e-learning generally and the social work law objects especially derived from recognition that students bring different learning styles to the classroom.

*I know a lot of the case reports they find to be quite difficult to engage with or to keep their attention, so I think it's nice for people who have different learning styles, because you have the visual aspect in kind of doing and you can flip through at your own pace. I think that's the main thing, is to capture different learning styles. If someone wants to go and read the case report themselves then that's still available as well. Yeah, so that's what I think, it's colourful and it looks better visually (HEI 3).*

*It's about providing as many different learning opportunities for students that you can, that relate to different styles and while some students will happily go and read a book, other students would much rather (use) technology... talking to the students I would say that they like that blended learning approach for sure. I think they like having a bit to do on the computer, a bit to read. They definitely like their hard copy notes to take away from them without a doubt, their handouts, but I think part of it is to make sure that what is a fundamental and key element of the social work role, students can learn in a way that's kind of accessible to them (HEI 1).*

The recognition that students and lecturers had different learning styles also meant that different people would engage with different types of reusable learning objects so the social work law sequence had to have, and was seen as having, different types of tools. Some preferred the interactive objects, others those that used case studies and fore-grounded real life situations. Most of the social work law objects were mentioned by at least some set

members as being useful in stimulating debate, linking law to contemporary events, highlighting the nature of social work practice in different settings, such as courts, and connecting legal rules to practice skills. The following quotation from a set member reinforces this observation about learning styles.

*I work well with auditory rather than visual and sometimes screens and me don't sit comfortably together and you don't have to heavily rely on staring at something in order to hear it (HEI 5).*

Ease of access to this source of learning was also positively commented upon (HEI 1). Indeed, this accessibility could be used to develop students' search and research skills by setting tasks that required them to find particular legal rules. Various positive reflections about content, accessibility and level are evident in this quotation:

*They're good, they're at your fingertips ... there's a range of things you can choose from, and the signposting is quite clear. I think you're not struggling to find things, so I think in that respect it's good. It's up to date, so it's got some really up to date stuff, and I think there's a level there that's very accessible (HEI 6).*

Another positive feature for set members and, in parallel students, was interaction. Those reusable learning objects which set members thought worked particularly well were those where students had to engage actively rather than sit more passively and listen. Objects 7, 8 and 10 are examples. Here they were seen as having an advantage over books.

*What that does in a much easier to understand way is to show how the law ... the complexity of the law in a way and how it interweaves (HEI 1).*

*[Referring to Object 8] Whereas if you click on them and you see this is what my perspective is and this one I think works really well as you've obviously gathered, it makes it more real and it makes students realise actually they can't just locate Evelyn there or they can't just locate the children there because you know, it's a more holistic way ... it's a better way I think or it's a lively, interactive way of understanding the complexity of the law (HEI 1).*

*I think it's more interactive. I think it gives a different dimension really to the experience... and it gives the students an option, an opportunity to try things and to explore things in a safe way without feeling that they're going to be laughed at or ridiculed or misinterpreted or whatever. So it's a sort of private, reflective tool, isn't it, as well as something they can do in groups if they wish to (HEI 5).*

So, if the medium was seen as useful, set members also recognised that the social work law objects could not be used in a stand-alone manner. They had to be accompanied by other learning opportunities. They might be good at giving students confidence; their accessibility and interactive nature might mean that they could reinforce through reiteration learning that students had been exposed to in taught sessions. However, they should not be used alone.

*What these tools have done is to give reassurances to students that they are on the right track and that they can explore the context of the law, applied law, in a safe way. So in that respect I think they are a superb tool. I think they're a great revision tool for practitioners. A great revision tool for us as teachers and learners, aren't they, because the very nature of them allows you to make mistakes and then discover why and go back and try again. But I think they've got to work in conjunction with the taught element and the wider reading and I think there is a danger that students will think they only need to look at that and they don't need to do any wider reading and I fear that one day students might think they can come in to do a degree and not have to pick up a book up and that worries me really (HEI 5).*

Equally, the educators were not uncritical of the law e-learning objects. Various, the law objects had proved somewhat inflexible or “difficult to move around” or “didn't seem to fit directly to the cases we were talking about”. The timing and structure of social work law modules could make it difficult to embed the objects methodically. This latter criticism led to a recommendation for improved signposting within each reusable learning object. For example, some indication of the spread content across the ten objects, and what could be found in each, could, for instance, enable students and tutors to identify where specific topics such as mental health or criminal justice might be covered.

*I think it was difficult for me trying to figure out how they fit with my particular class, I think if it was a class about what is law it would have been a little bit easier, but since we have 10 weeks of this week's mental health, this week's community care, I found it a bit difficult just to find out which ones fit without spending a whole day looking through them all to see how I can match them. So I found that to be a bit time consuming and probably if I knew them all better myself and was comfortable with the class I think it would have been easier, so I think it'll be easier over time (HEI 3).*

Educators would also appreciate having access to objects that address different levels or stages of students' learning journey.

*They thought it was very basic, they said “well we should know this already” (HEI 3).*

*It would be really nice to have e-learning objects at level one, level two and level three almost and they're all mixed up and so, as a teacher, you have to be really familiar with them, to say ‘that's great for level one, that's absolutely not even any point in directing them there’. Whereas in terms of having that accessibility would be great, say they're level one, they're level twos and they're level threes (HEI 1).*

One member thought that this could be achieved through using an object to introduce and then analyse a case.

Several set members wanted a facility that would allow students' use of the objects to be tracked and knowledge of the law to be assessed. Another would find a glossary useful and

also considered that the objects might be difficult to use by those for whom English was a second language. One was explicitly critical of the object where service users and carers recounted their experiences of social work and social workers, believing that it lacked balance. Several set members, in parallel with some students, found several of the objects too long and suggested that they should be broken down into component parts which could be accessed separately. There were also criticisms of how the objects looked.

*I'm not particularly keen on the artwork, I'm not particularly keen on the caricature cartoon-y type process. Because the detail and the information is so acute and so real for people, I think it has a lot more vision impact if it's a real person that they see (HEI 5).*

Ultimately, student motivation would be a key factor in how much the objects would be used, something which students also acknowledged. Educators considered that students' focus on assignments and concern about the time they had available could be barriers to using the objects.

*It comes back to my thing about the student being, or the person using it really has to be, motivated to look it up ... I'd quite like to get to a point where I see what students are doing, because although I'm all into the adult learning stuff, you go off and you take responsibility for doing it. I think that there are a lot of students who would actually benefit from doing it, but unless you know they're not doing it, you can't guide them otherwise. That is my big bug bear with this thing, that we're relying on their, if you like, their integrity to go off and do it, so I would want an opportunity where we could go into a computer lab, and just get people to do it, so those who keep lying or fobbing me off and say, "yes we've done it, yes we've done it", just get them to get into it and see whether that would work, plus having the law exam online so that they've got more of a reason to get engaged with the whole e-learning process, because they know at the end of the 12 weeks, exams are all going to be online (HEI 6).*

## **6. Outcomes for Student Learning**

### **6.1 Findings from the student questionnaires**

The main results reported here relate to the students across all institutions for whom matched data using the common questionnaire are available. Out of a total of 481 individual T1 and T2 responses (using the common questionnaire) over the two years of teaching (n=283 at T1, n=198 at T2) 143 are matched for comparison across the different time points. Additionally, since the analysis of the modes of learning questions takes place at Time 2, the unmatched respondents at this point are included (total n at T2 = 198) In one institution, the student questionnaires were not administered before the law teaching took place; therefore T1 scores (and thus matched pairings) are not available. Another institution used a different model of questionnaire for both years of teaching, meaning that their replies could not be included in the common question database. Table 8 gives the breakdown of matched pairs by institution

*Table 8: Number of matched pairs per institution<sup>7</sup>*

	HEI	N	Percentage of Total
Valid	HEI A	18	12.6%
	HEI B	31	21.7%
	HEI C	24	16.8%
	HEI D	47	32.9%
	HEI E	23	16.1%
	HEI F	0	0
Total		143	100.0%

Gender breakdown – 89% female (n=127), 11% male (n=16)

Within the matched sample of 143, some students had not completed the full questionnaire and therefore the number of respondents for different questions varies. This variation was for three reasons.

- Some educators had left sets of questions or individual questions out of their version of the questionnaire.
- Some students had done the equivalent by saying that a question was not applicable, for instance where observational visits had not taken place, or the student had not had a chance to experience consulting with lawyers.
- There were cases as well where students had chosen not to answer a question, but no reason was given.

The extension of the student outcomes element of the study for the academic year 2010-2011 has provided the opportunity to standardize the questionnaire, and to review all questions for relevance. Three additional HEIs are taking part, bringing the total to 9. Thus it is anticipated that data from a considerably larger matched cohort will be available once the extended project is complete.

### *6.1.1 Modes of Learning*

The Time 2 questionnaire contained questions about how students had experienced the modes of learning used on their law module. These were analysed for all students who had answered this set of questions, matched and unmatched (n=203 at T2) to identify how learners had rated the experiences that they had on their law modules - 'very useful', 'useful' or 'not very useful'. Figure 10 shows the results, with frequency counts in Table 9.

<sup>7</sup> For reasons of confidentiality within the learning set, the HEIs are here listed using a different set of identifiers (A to F) from the numerical (1 to 6) system used in reporting qualitative findings from the educator interviews in the earlier section of the report.

Figure 10: Modes of Learning Experience at Time 2

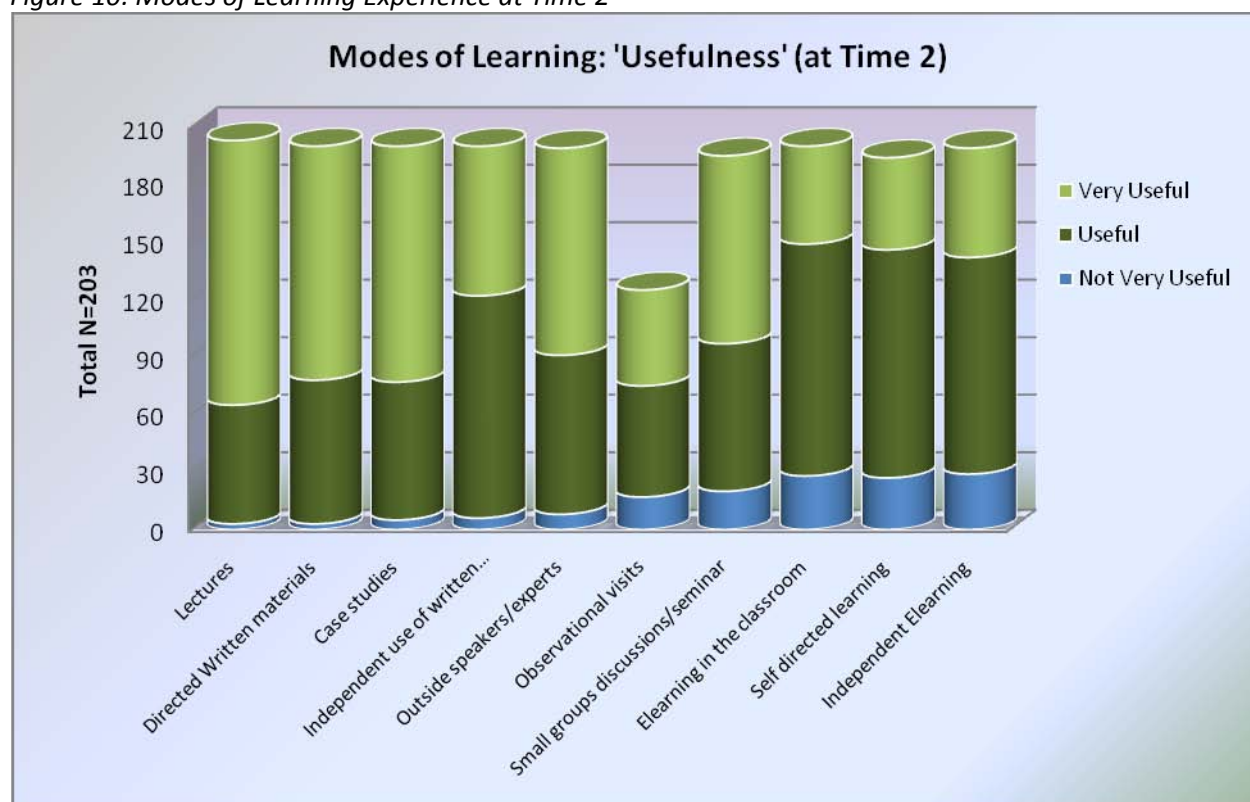


Table 9: Modes of Learning Experience at Time 2 - Frequency Count

	Total <i>n</i>	Very Useful	% of <i>n</i>	Useful	% of <i>n</i>	Not Very Useful	% of <i>n</i>
Lectures	203	138	68%	62	31%	3	1%
Directed Written materials	200	122	61%	75	38%	3	2%
Case studies	200	123	62%	72	36%	5	3%
Independent use of written materials	200	78	39%	116	58%	6	3%
Outside speakers/experts	199	108	54%	83	42%	8	4%
Observational visits	125	50	40%	58	46%	17	14%
Small groups discussions/seminar	195	98	50%	77	39%	20	10%
Self directed learning	194	48	25%	119	61%	27	14%
E-learning in the classroom	200	51	26%	121	61%	28	14%
Independent E-learning	199	57	29%	113	57%	29	15%

The majority of students were positive about the teaching methods used in their social work law modules, rating them as 'very useful' or 'useful'. The top five methods (lectures, directed written materials, case studies, independent use of written materials and outside speakers/experts) were rated 'very useful' or 'useful' by between 96% and 99% of participants. Four of these (lectures, case studies, directed written materials, and outside speakers/experts) were considered 'very useful' by over half the respondents, rising to 68% of the total for the top mode of learning, lectures. The lowest rated mode of learning (Independent e-learning learning) was still considered useful or very useful by 85% of respondents. E-learning, though at the bottom of the table, was still rated as very useful by a higher number of students than self-directed learning, and was considered to be a useful



or very useful way to learn by 85% and 86% of participants (independent e-learning and e-learning in the classroom, respectively).

The modes of learning which had a slightly higher level of response within the 'not very useful' category included what could be seen as independent learning and self directed activities. This also is reflected in the last of the higher rated teaching methods, 'independent use of written materials', which received a comparatively low 'very useful' level of 39% of respondents (though 58% still considered it 'useful'). These data were analysed further by Age Status (those 25 years or older and those under 25). Although 69% of this sample group<sup>8</sup> were students over 25 (n=140), by looking at the percentage that answered in each age category as a total of that age category it was possible to see whether certain modes of learning were considered less useful by the younger students than by those in the older age ranges. Most areas of learning shared similar scores between younger and older age sets, with minor difference (<4%) between them. For example, older students found small group discussions slightly less useful than younger students ('not very useful': older=10.4%. n=14, younger=8.6%, n=5). Younger students said that independent use of written materials and outside speakers were less useful to them, as a group, than older students did (see statistics in Table 10). The one category that stood out was the independent, individual use of e-learning resources. Here, a considerably higher proportion of the older students said that this was very useful or useful, compared to the younger students (older students =89.9%, younger students = 74.1%).

*Table 10: Modes of learning by Age Status*

Lectures			Not very useful		Very useful		Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	1	18	40	59	
		% of Age Range	1.7%	30.5%	67.8%	100.0%	
	Mature	Count	2	41	97	140	
		% of Age Range	1.4%	29.3%	69.3%	100.0%	
Total		Count	3	59	137	199	
		% total	1.5%	29.6%	68.8%	100.0%	
Written materials/handouts prepared by the lecturer			Not very useful		Very useful		Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	2	22	35	59	
		% of Age Range	3.4%	37.3%	59.3%	100.0%	
	Mature	Count	1	51	85	137	
		% of Age Range	.7%	37.2%	62.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	3	73	120	196	
		% total	1.5%	37.2%	61.2%	100.0%	

<sup>8</sup> 4 learners (2%) did not give their age. 59 students were in the non-mature set (29%)

Observational visits outside the university			Not very useful		Very useful		Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	7	23	14	44	
		% of Age Range	15.9%	52.3%	31.8%	100.0%	
	Mature	Count	13	35	36	84	
		% of Age Range	15.5%	41.7%	42.9%	100.0%	
Total		Count	20	58	50	128	
		% total	15.6%	45.3%	39.1%	100.0%	
Self-directed learning			Not very useful		Very useful		Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	7	42	9	58	
		% of Age Range	12.1%	72.4%	15.5%	100.0%	
	Mature	Count	20	75	38	133	
		% of Age Range	15.0%	56.4%	28.6%	100.0%	
Total		Count	27	117	47	191	
		% total	14.1%	61.3%	24.6%	100.0%	
E-learning resources used in the classroom			Not very useful		Very useful		Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	9	42	8	59	
		% of Age Range	15.3%	71.2%	13.6%	100.0%	
	Mature	Count	17	79	42	138	
		% of Age Range	12.3%	57.2%	30.4%	100.0%	
Total		Count	26	121	50	197	
		% total	13.2%	61.4%	25.4%	100.0%	
Independent individual use of e-learning resources			Not very useful		Very useful		Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	15	34	9	58	
		% of Age Range	25.9%	58.6%	15.5%	100.0%	
	Mature	Count	14	77	47	138	
		% of Age Range	10.1%	55.8%	34.1%	100.0%	
Total		Count	29	111	56	196	
		% total	14.8%	56.6%	28.6%	100.0%	

Small group discussions/seminars			Not very useful	Useful	Very useful	Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	5	21	32	58
		% of Age Range	8.6%	36.2%	55.2%	100.0%
	Mature	Count	14	55	65	134
		% of Age Range	10.4%	41.0%	48.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	19	76	97	192
		% total	9.9%	39.6%	50.5%	100.0%
Independent individual use of books and other print materials			Not very useful	Useful	Very useful	Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	3	36	19	58
		% of Age Range	5.2%	62.1%	32.8%	100.0%
	Mature	Count	3	78	58	139
		% of Age Range	2.2%	56.1%	41.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	6	114	77	197
		% total	3.0%	57.9%	39.1%	100.0%
Use of outside speakers/experts in the classroom			Not very useful	Useful	Very useful	Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	3	26	28	57
		% of Age Range	5.3%	45.6%	49.1%	100.0%
	Mature	Count	5	54	79	138
		% of Age Range	3.6%	39.1%	57.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	8	80	107	195
		% total	4.1%	41.0%	54.9%	100.0%
Case study exercises			Not very useful	Useful	Very useful	Total
Age Status	Non-mature	Count	1	23	33	57
		% of Age Range	1.8%	40.4%	57.9%	100.0%
	Mature	Count	4	46	89	139
		% of Age Range	2.9%	33.1%	64.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	5	69	122	196
		% total	2.6%	35.2%	62.2%	100.0%

### 6.1.2 Students' confidence in knowledge and skills in relation to law

A group of 5 questions measured the learners' confidence in their law learning, and in their knowledge and understanding of law; all showed improved scores at Time 2 (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Confidence in law learning



A matched T-test was used in order to see whether the differences in the means between T1 and T2 was statistically significant ( $n=142$  for questions 1 & 4,  $n=143$  for questions 2, 3, & 5). All five questions disproved the null hypothesis (no change), showing a significant, moderate effect as demonstrated in Table 11.

Table 11: Matched T-test -Confidence in law learning

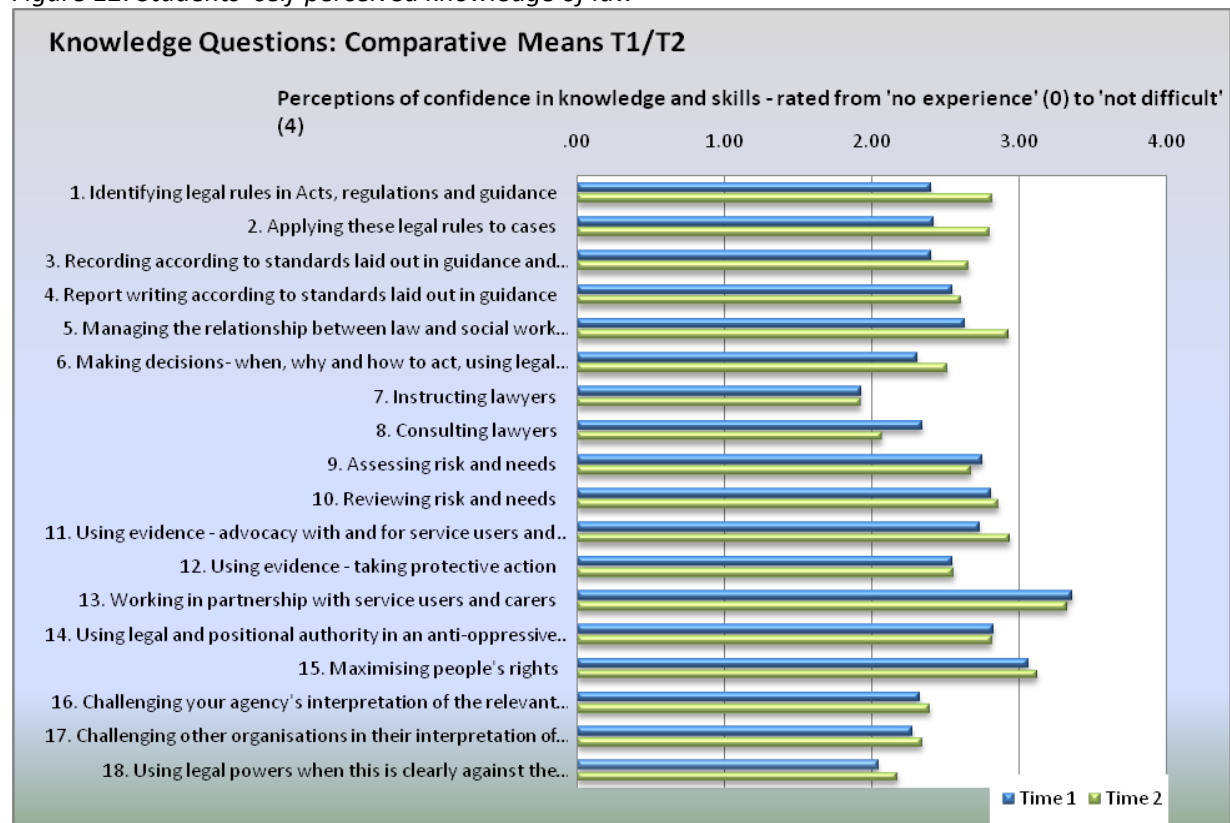
Matched T-Test: Confidence in law learning		N	Correlation (r)	Sig.
Q 1	I feel that I understand the relationship between law and social work	142	.401	0.000
Q 2	I have knowledge of the legal powers and duties that social workers have	143	.380	0.000
Q 3	I feel confident that I can practise within the legal rules	143	.374	0.000
Q 4	I think law is going to be an easy subject for me to learn	142	.448	0.000
Q 5	I feel confident that I can learn about the law	143	.355	0.031

The smallest effect was seen at the question about confidence in learning about the law. However the mean at the start of the course (T1) is the highest of all the questions ( $M=2.16$ ). This may show an overconfidence in ability before the course began, but nonetheless, the learners' confidence increased over the period of their courses.

A group of 18 questions measured students' self-perceived knowledge of law. These 'knowledge questions' were also compared between the participants using a matched T-test.

There was a smaller set of students who answered these questions, as some institutions chose not to use them (n=94).

Figure 12: Students' self-perceived knowledge of law



Although, as shown in Figure 12, there was movement between most of the means of T1 and T2, (question 12 was static) not all of these were significant. Some showed a negative effect, where participants felt less confident when their course finished than when it began (questions 7, 8, 9, 13 and 14). Questions 1, 2, 3, and 5 showed a significant improvement in confidence between T1 and T2. This was a small effect except in relation to questions 1 and 2, which showed a medium effect (.359 and .437 respectively). Question 8 (Consulting lawyers) showed a significant negative effect. As with the previous set of questions, this may partly be due to the differences between expectations on starting the course, and the reality of the complex nature of social work law in practice. The questions where there had been a significant improvement relate specifically to learning about law and applying it to theoretical as well as real-life cases, whilst many of the other skills are ones that require practice in the field. Questions in which changes were significant are highlighted in Table 12.

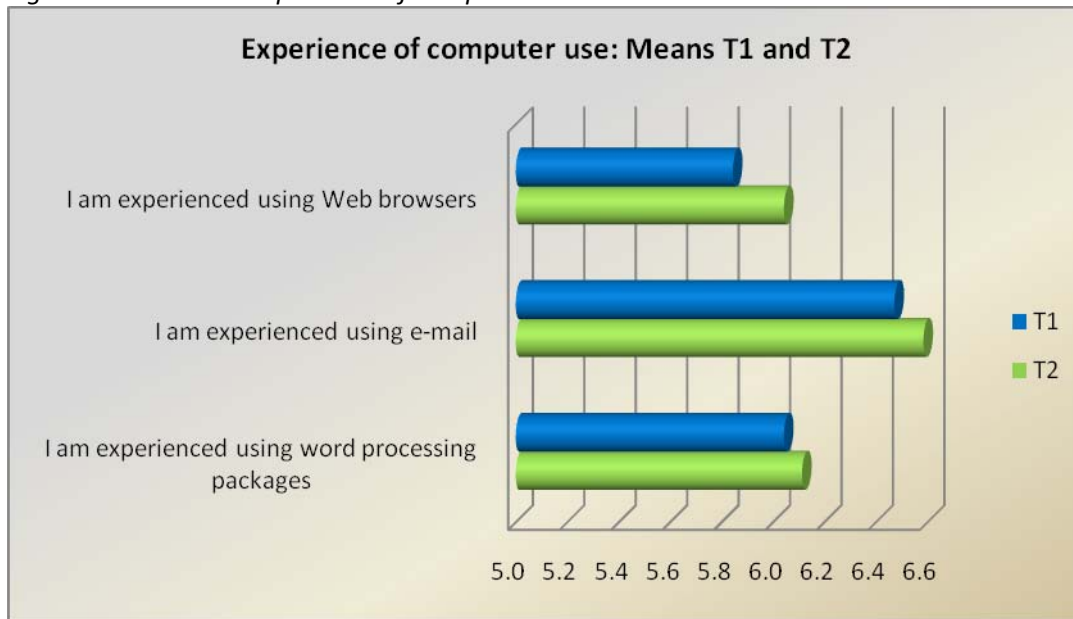
*Table 12: Changes in legal knowledge over T1 and T2: significance and correlation*

	Time 1	Time 2	N	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation (where Sig.)
1. Identifying legal rules in Acts, regulations and guidance	2.40	2.82	94	.000	.359
2. Applying these legal rules to cases	2.41	2.80	94	.000	.437
3. Recording according to standards laid out in guidance and case law	2.40	2.66	90	.016	.162
4. Report writing according to standards laid out in guidance	2.55	2.60	93	.631	
5. Managing the relationship between law and social work values	2.63	2.92	91	.001	.254
6. Making decisions- when, why and how to act, using legal powers and duties	2.30	2.51	92	.053	
7. Instructing lawyers	1.92	1.92	90	1.000	
8. Consulting lawyers	2.34	2.07	90	.031	.303
9. Assessing risk and needs	2.75	2.67	91	.502	
10. Reviewing risk and needs	2.81	2.86	84	.676	
11. Using evidence - advocacy with and for service users and carers	2.73	2.93	92	.056	
12. Using evidence - taking protective action	2.54	2.56	90	.926	
13. Working in partnership with service users and carers	3.35	3.32	93	.728	
14. Using legal and positional authority in an anti-oppressive way	2.82	2.81	90	.921	
15. Maximising people's rights	3.07	3.12	92	.590	
16. Challenging your agency's interpretation of the relevant legal rules in a case	2.33	2.39	92	.624	
17. Challenging other organisations in their interpretation of the law	2.27	2.34	92	.615	
18. Using legal powers when this is clearly against the wishes of service users	2.04	2.17	92	.272	

### *6.1.3 Students' experience of computer use and attitudes to the e-learning environment*

The final set of questions (derived from Liaw et al (2007)) was analysed in two groups. The questions all used a 7-point Likert Scale to rate levels of experience of using the internet and computer technologies (group 1) and attitudes to the e-learning environment (group 2). These questions were tested for reliability using a Cronbach Reliability test, and two questions in group 1 ('I am experienced coding Web pages', 'I have little experience of using e-learning in my education') were eliminated. Results for the remaining group 1 questions relating to experience are shown in Figure 13.

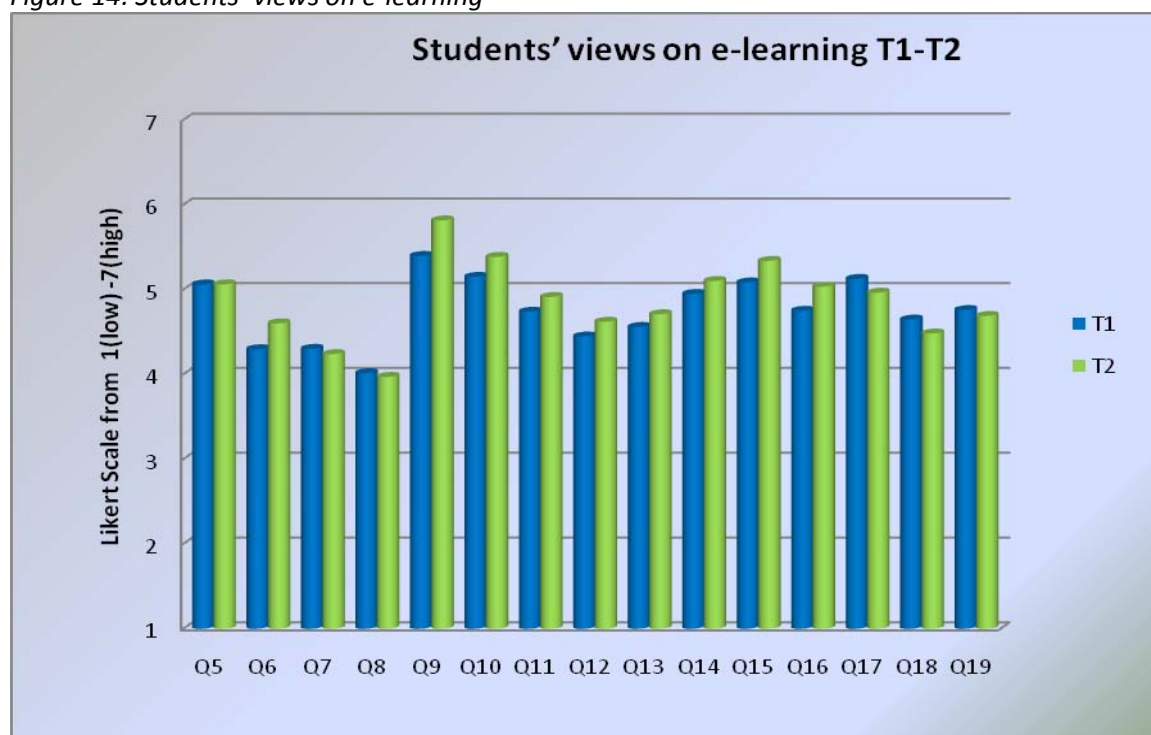
Figure 13: Students' experience of computer use



Although none of these questions about experience of computer use showed a statistically significant change between T1 and T2, there was an upward trend to all means. It is worthwhile noting that all three of these questions showed a high level of experience initially, so that any change maybe as a result of using the e-learning objects, but also may reflect an increase in use of computers generally as a result of studying at university.

The second group of questions derived from Liaw et al (2007) tested respondents' views about and attitudes to the e-learning environment. The results are shown in Figure 14. Although 9 of the 15 questions showed an improvement of the mean, only one question showed any significant improvement, although the effect size was small ('I can read the online instructions actively' – mean T1 5.4, T2 5.82,  $r=2.67$ , sig 0.006). This effect is likely to be linked to the use of the e-learning objects, although it was also a question whose wording some found confusing. This was also the case for some of the remainder of these questions, according to a few comments, and question marks, written alongside them. The Likert scale used (rated from 'no experience' to 'very experienced', rather than 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') was also unclear for the meaning of the questions. This lack of clarity may be reflected in the replies. The set of questions has been revised for the extension of the project through the 2010-2011 academic year, and more reliable data may be anticipated.

Figure 14: Students' views on e-learning



Q5	I can learn actively in the e-learning environment
Q6	I have more opportunities to create my own knowledge in the e-learning environment
Q7	The hypertext online instruction can enhance my learning motivation
Q8	I can discuss actively with others in the e-learning environment
Q9	I can read the online instruction actively
Q10	I can find information actively in the e-learning environment
Q11	The e-learning environment improves my thinking skills
Q12	The e-learning environment enhances my problem-solving skills
Q13	The e-learning environment provides various aspects to solve problems
Q14	I like colourful pictures in online instruction
Q15	I like learning videos in online instruction
Q16	I like the animated online instruction
Q17	I like the instructor's help and suggestions in the e-learning environment
Q18	I like the instructor's voice and image in the e-learning environment
Q19	I like the instructor's online multimedia instruction in the e-learning environment

A final question asked learners whether they thought that online learning was of equal quality to traditional classroom teaching. Although there was no statistically significant change over the means of the two time periods, it is interesting to note that there was a shift in opinion as seen in the frequency counts in T1 and T2 (Table 13), showing more favorable views of e-learning's value at Time 2.



Table 13: Views on the quality of e-learning as compared to traditional learning

I feel that online learning is of at least equal quality to traditional classroom learning					
		Frequency T1	Frequency T2	% Total T1	% Total T2
	Don't know	3	4	2.1%	2.8%
	No	75	63	52.4%	44.1%
	Yes	58	70	40.6%	49.0%
	No reply	7	6	4.9%	4.2%
	Total	143	143		

#### 6.1.4 Findings from additional questions at Time 2

One of the institutions ran a separate set of questions for both cohort one and two (n=24/36), and this set of questions was also used by another university for their second cohort (n=57). This gave the study an additional group of questions with 117 replies at T2. Although these were not part of the initial methodology, some of the findings were directly pertinent to learners' attitudes to the e-learning objects themselves, as well as assessing whether they found e-learning more 'comfortable' after having completed their law course.

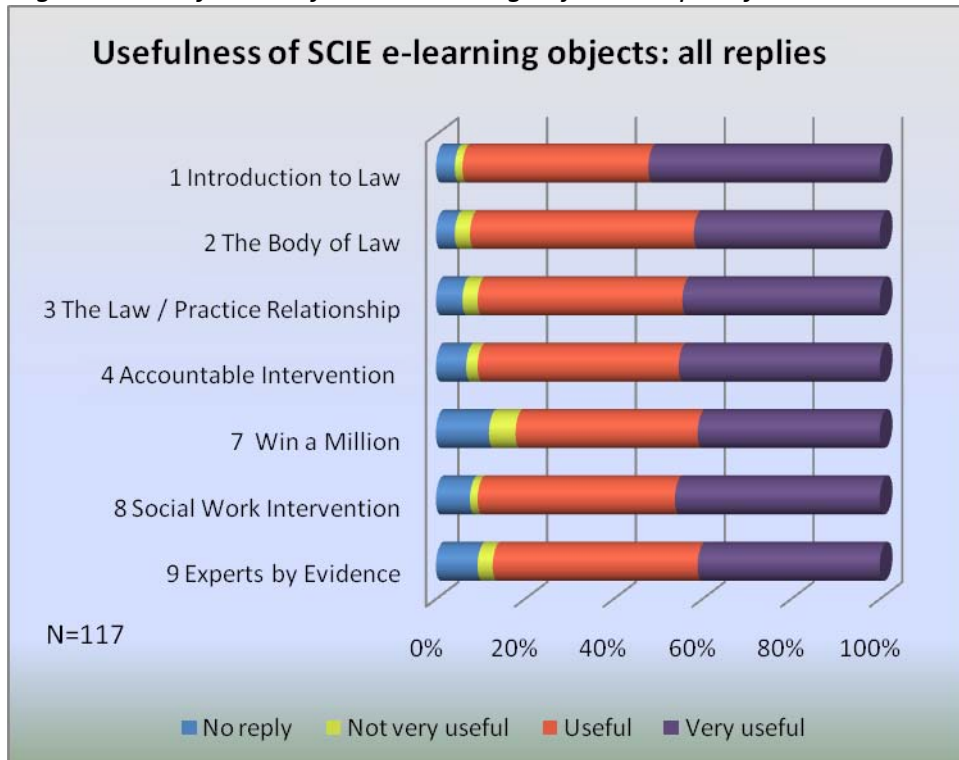
On the latter, there was a considerable movement towards feeling comfortable with e-learning after use of the e-learning objects (Table 14). While the before and after mean of the count shifted from 3.23 to 4.36, there was also a downward movement in the standard deviation of the count, from 1.03 to 0.56, suggesting there was closer agreement with the statement after the e-learning took place.

Table 14 Frequency count - "I felt comfortable using the e learning environment": before and after use of SCIE e-learning objects

	Before	After
Strongly agree	12	47
Agree	36	65
Neutral	42	5
Disagree	21	0
Strongly disagree	6	0
Total replies	117	117

In looking at the questions which asked respondents to rate the usefulness of the SCIE e-learning objects they had used, it was possible to split the groups into the two separate institutions, A and B, for analysis, as well as looking at them as a whole group. Across both groups the strong majority in all cases found their use of all the e-learning objects had been useful or very useful. Figure 15 shows the combined results.

Figure 15: Usefulness of SCIE e-learning objects – replies from both institutions combined



Group A, however, had a stronger tendency to reply that they were ‘useful’, while group B were more likely to say that they were ‘very useful’. Figures 16 and 17 show the results for the two groups separately, with details of the responses in Table 15.

Figure 16: usefulness of SCIE e-learning objects – results from institution A

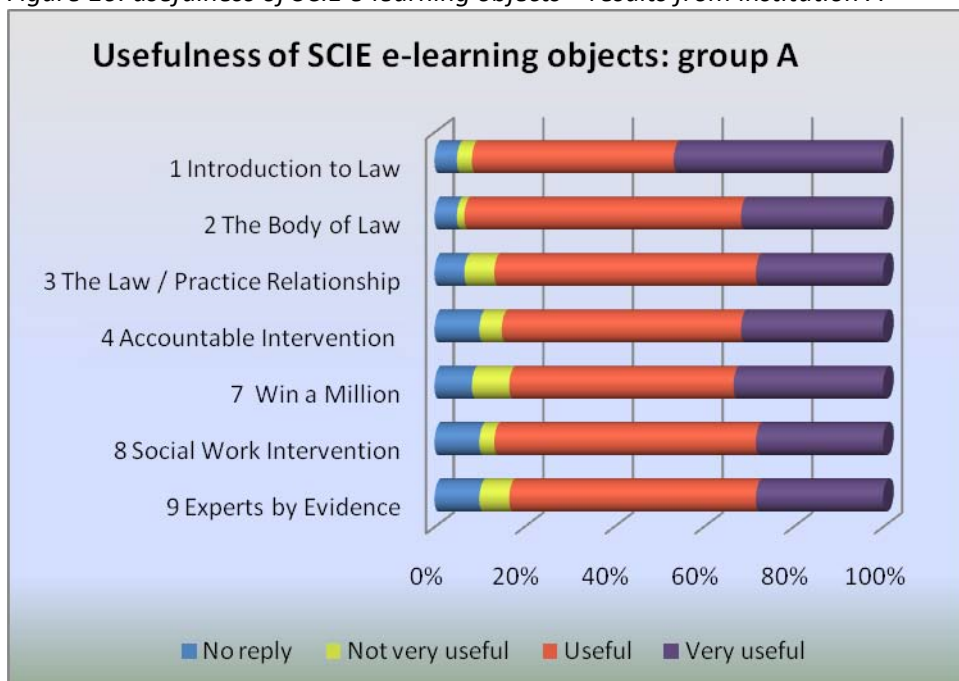


Figure 17: usefulness of SCIE e-learning objects – results from institution B

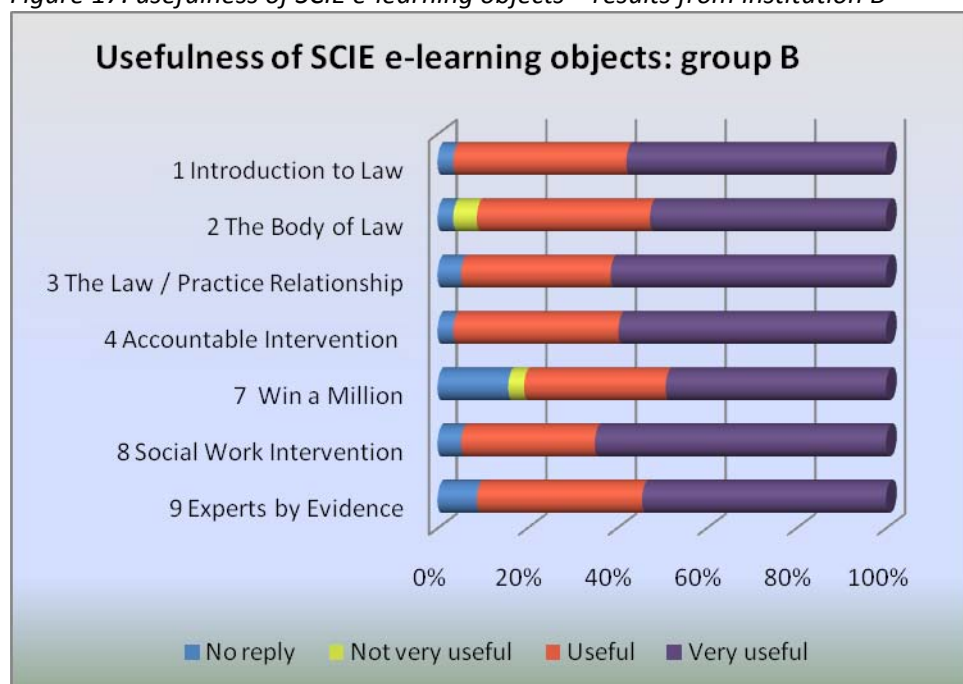


Table 15: Responses on usefulness of the e-learning objects by institution

	A group N=60				B group N=57			
	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	No reply	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	No reply
1 Introduction to Law	47%	45%	3%	5%	58%	39%	0%	4%
2 The Body of Law	32%	62%	2%	5%	53%	39%	5%	4%
3 The Law / Practice Relationship	28%	58%	7%	7%	61%	33%	0%	5%
4 Accountable Intervention	32%	53%	5%	10%	60%	37%	0%	4%
7 Win a Million	33%	50%	8%	8%	49%	32%	4%	16%
8 Social Work Intervention	28%	58%	3%	10%	65%	30%	0%	5%
9 Experts by Evidence	28%	55%	7%	10%	54%	37%	0%	9%

The highest scoring e-learning object overall was the Introduction to Law, which was scored as 'useful' or 'very useful' by 94%, while the Win a Million section was the lowest score, though still at 82% for 'useful' or 'very useful'. This generally high rating was reflected in the comments that were made regarding using the SCIE e-learning tool, for instance, *"good to go back to"* and *"E-learning has been very beneficial and has supported my learning in addition to my reading from books"*. Where comments were less favorable, they tended to be about the lack of time available, or about not liking the self-directed nature of the objects.

## 6.2 Findings from the student focus groups<sup>9</sup>

The student focus groups provided a rich source of data. They cast light upon student perceptions of law learning in general, as well as upon the perceived merits of blended learning, and of the SCIE law e-learning objects in particular.

### 6.2.1 Perceptions of law

Students anticipated their law learning with a variety of emotions. This variety was apparent within as well as across focus groups in the different HEIs. Indeed, the contrast within individual groups presents quite a challenge for educators who teach law to social work students. Anxiety, even fear, and feeling overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of learning required are common. Legal language is perceived as inaccessible and the interface between law and social work as complex.

*I knew absolutely nothing about it and to be honest I was absolutely dreading it. I knew it had to be done but I absolutely was not looking forward to it one bit. Because I've always associated Law with being complex, difficult, you know, you can't understand it, it's not everybody's sort of cup of tea, that sort of thing (student HEI 3).*

*I just thought it's so wide; like I was really looking forward to doing the module but a bit worried because it's so wide, how do you learn the whole everything in sort of a term? It was a bit daunting, but it has been broken down fairly well; there's still quite a lot (student HEI 2).*

*It's not straightforward. There are little links and clauses and ways around things and ways through things and there are little loopholes. There is nothing straightforward, it all depends on which angle you're coming from (student HEI 1).*

Sometimes the anxious anticipation revolved around the volume of material to be covered in the time available.

*It's the shortest module, we knew that we'd only got (a few) weeks to cram it all in and I think that was quite scary for everybody (student HEI 1).*

Sometimes it was related to the volume and complexity of the material, together with recognition that what had been learned in year one of the programme might have changed by the time the students qualified.

*And also for me as well the knowledge that it's just constantly evolving and I think one of the girls who's on this course, her mum is a social worker and she says "Well*

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<sup>9</sup> In reporting on the students' views, each HEI is referred to by a number (allocated in random sequence) which is different from the number used in reporting the educators' views earlier in this report. This is in order to ensure that educators cannot readily identify the views of their own students and thus preserves confidentiality for students in any given HEI.

*it's not really worth you buying a law book because it changes every year". And that constantly having to re-learn, you can never really know because it's on a continuum really (student HEI 4).*

*I was extremely worried about it because I feel that even though I know bits of law to do with me and my everyday life, actually in-depth law I hadn't got a clue, so I was really worried that I wasn't going to absorb it all and I know law is all about Acts and all the rest of it and how the heck am I going to remember the name of the Act, the year it was – I've got a bad enough memory as it is, let alone things that are very similar, with names, and very close years ... I thought there's no way I'm going to be able to remember it all (student HEI 5).*

*So then it's about also how it keeps changing, so maybe what we are learning now first year, by the time we get to third year there will be a lot of other added sections and all this and it's about keeping up to date with all that (student HEI 5).*

*I think there is a lot of it that you have to learn whereas like you say with other subjects you can kind of relate it to what you want to do in the end and apply it to which section you want to be working in. Whereas with law, there is difference for children, for adults, for mental health, there are so many different things which we need to have a grasp of everything (student HEI 1).*

Sometimes students recognised the responsibility that they would carry, with anxiety being one response to the accountability that they would have to demonstrate.

*Also it seems like the one the thing that you can get you into the most trouble in the job, if you don't know your duties (student HEI 1).*

*I wasn't particularly looking forward to it, but I knew it had to be part of the curriculum, so I might as well just get my teeth into it, because it's law in social work and with what you hear about social workers, in court cases and things like that, I knew I had to come to grips with it. It can be daunting, especially if you don't understand, because I hadn't learnt it at great depth and hearing what can go wrong and anticipating what can go wrong and how I can be brought to account in a legal framework that can be daunting, but I actually knew that if I got involved into a court case or any legal procedure like that, so it's just imagining what would happen (student HEI 5).*

Sometimes the fearful anticipation was occasioned by how their law learning would be assessed.

*I was worried just because I knew there was an exam at the end of law, that's what worried me the most (student HEI 6).*

What these opening perceptions meant was that students were not confident about their ability to engage with, and apply learning from, law.

*Not very confident, I just thought you'd have to know the ins and outs of the law completely, so that was my perspective of it (student HEI 6).*

However, some students had looked forward to law teaching and learning, showing the same commitment and enthusiasm for the subject as the learning set members. This was sometimes related to prior study and sometimes to the authority that the law was perceived as giving social work practitioners.

*It was the legal that I was looking forward to the most, probably because it's something that I've got an interest in, in terms of it fascinates me how the system works but also in terms of how important it is, and I thought I'm going to be a social worker, the law's going to be pretty important and to have knowledge of law would also help in my life in general as well. So I have to say I was very much looking forward to it and my knowledge wasn't terribly good (student HEI 3).*

*It does give you a bit of authority and ... without being you know, a police person (student HEI 3).*

*I could make some sense because I was already working for social services before starting the course, so we'd looked at the law, we'd have training around adult law, but children's law is completely new to me (student HEI 6).*

Allied to this was the sense conveyed by some students that legal knowledge would be useful to social workers as advocates and as guardians of human rights. The relevance of law lay in being able to see its application to practice.

*I thought of it being with the service user, the client, whatever, I find that part of it, the law, fitting in to how to use it ... and looking at human rights, ASBOs and young people, how as a social worker do I work with the law and show the client how to use the law (student HEI 4).*

### 6.2.2 Learning law

The experiences so fearfully anticipated had not always materialised. Law teaching and learning had actually enabled students to access legal knowledge. Indeed, making law accessible and connecting it to real practice enabled students to acquire confidence and overcome their antipathy towards the subject.

*I felt that it was going to be a bit dry, that we're going to be spoken to by people that were obviously qualified lawyers, knew their subject and would speak to us in a way that, as they would talk to each other, but actually it's been quite accessible, it's been quite the opposite actually (student HEI 2).*

*They've managed to make it accessible, I don't know if they've made it a bit simpler (student HEI 2).*

*I used to think law was not that interesting, or a bit dry, but since I've been doing the two essays on legislation and I've had to do a lot of research and look at the case law I'm finding it quite interesting, a bit like investigation and putting pieces together ... I think it's because you're looking at cases, real people and their situations, having seen how the law applies to different situations and how the law can be interpreted or misinterpreted, and it makes it all a lot more real (student HEI 4).*

Initial assumptions that law and legal knowledge would comprise clear facts to be learned had also been challenged, at least for some students.

*For me I think it was that law would be more exacting than some of the other modules and although now I appreciate there are actually more grey areas - certainly this morning we did mental capacity and the ethical issues around that are huge - but I felt it would be a little bit more concrete than a lot of the other, psychological, sociological aspects that we do. So actually I've really enjoyed it, yeah. ... No, I thought it would be more concrete, actually it isn't and there are loads of areas but it's for me, I'm a bit more practical-based and it seems certainly something I can get hold of and read and understand a little bit more than other elements of the course (student HEI 2).*

Sometimes students struggled to see the relevance to practice of what they were learning in the law. In part this was related to the timing of their law learning in the academic curriculum.

*I can understand it, I really do, but again it's just putting it into practice, I think because we didn't really do much law before we went on placement (student HEI 4).*

*It was quite hard to put it into practice. So we've come back off first placement really unaware of what the law is, and now we've gone onto our third placement still sort of unaware how to put it into practice. I think we should maybe do law before we go on our very first placement, I think maybe it should be touched upon (earlier) (student HEI 4).*

For others learning had involved working out their relationship or role within the legal rules and acquiring the ability to use a different language. This was related to having the confidence to present an informed recommendation and to work alongside other professionals.

*My issue with it is the terminology, because do you as a social worker try and think like a lawyer, because that's how it's interpreted, isn't it, it's a lawyer that defends the case. We as social workers may have to write reports to the court, so how do we turn everything so that the other professionals understand exactly what we're saying and when we're with lawyers, we don't (want to) look stupid because we don't have the principles or the terminology that we can defend a client or support a client. I*

*think that's important. And when you read the text it is old English a lot of it (student HEI 4).*

There was also some expressed admiration for the skills that legal practitioners demonstrated. Contained in the following quotation is a sense of what it takes to be authoritative.

*And when you're reading judgments it's very kind of like, not brutal, but it's to the point which is great and I wish we could learn to write like that when we apply the law so that we're more clearer that under this section... bom-bom-bom, 'cause then if you're clearer then you can express it to your client in a way that they can understand. I think is important, and I don't get that feeling when we're learning (student HEI 4).*

Effective teaching was about enabling students to develop a legal literacy, to learn a different, legal language and then to be able to translate that legal language for service users and carers. This required students to learn how to work collaboratively with legal practitioners and to act as a bridge and an intermediary between law and social work.

*It's taking that professional perspective of the law, 'cause that's what it is, the courts and everything, bringing it down to a level that we as social workers can understand, but also can go back up towards the law and the professionals and then take it to another level, the way I see it, to the client so that they can see it at another level ... Because you're bringing it down every time. They're looking at us to give them guidance on the law but we're looking at lawyers for guidance from them, but if it's lost in translation then how are we going to help? (student HEI 4)*

On a different tack, students often commented that effective teaching involved bringing the subject alive in some way. Linking the academic curriculum to practice was one way in which this was achieved. Case study discussions, and use of the law e-learning objects, were other techniques through which learning could have an impact that endured. The following exchange in a focus group illustrates the point being made.

*-Even though we're told never to make assumptions about anything, I'm assuming that within my practice when I start it I will learn the law on the job and then it will make more sense to me. But in classroom situations it tends to wash over me a little bit sometimes. And you worry, don't you, then, you think 'oh my goodness'.*

*-Yes, I say it's flat. To me it needs to feel more 3D. Not so much role play because even role plays can be quite flat because you know you're acting, and I hate role plays. But with videos or something visual and then the lecturer could say "right, go into groups, what did you see, what did you hear, what would you do?" At least you know what's in front of you is a real life person, not unless it's animation, and to me that makes it more 3D, more organic, more real, and I'll be like "oh my God, I didn't think about that person in the background". It makes it more interesting and more fun (students HEI 4).*



Bringing the topic alive and making connections to practice could also be achieved by lecturers drawing on their own experience and by drawing on practitioners as visiting speakers. The students conveyed a sense that the content and process of taught sessions could make a real difference. This revolved around sessions being informative and interactive. However, achieving clarity about roles and practice could sometimes leave students with the impression of being limited rather than empowered by the legal rules.

*The style of the teaching (is important) ... the framework was always similar, we'd have the subject matter; [Lecturer] would do an overview of the subject matter with us and would start with a discussion really, with ideas and what I loved the most about it was [lecturer] would bring in their own personal experiences to illuminate what they were talking about, and I found that really helped to secure in my mind how it actually works in practice. And then we would do the business part of it, going through all the schedules and all the paperwork essentially which, yes, at times could be a lot to take in, especially when we were doing the Children Act, but because the first part had been so informative in terms of discussion and debate, it made the next part before we went onto the SCIE objects do-able ... really engaging (student HEI 3).*

*I thought it was going to be boring. But I think the idea of having different lecturers has really made it to be a bit interesting because they do share the experiences in practice rather than the theory side of it, just reading books, they actually share the experiences in their practice (student HEI 2).*

*So I really found it quite interesting to see different professionals coming in, professionals working with children, working with adult services and all different things, I found it interesting (student HEI 2).*

*I expected and it has been the case that it's defined different social work roles quite well, with the mental health people, child protection and that sort of stuff and it's made it a lot clearer to me what you are able to do, can and can't, the restrictions that are upon you, however much they sort of go on about oh, you know, find creative ways to deal with service users and things like that, in fact you are constrained within the law and I think that's been made quite clear to me through the module (student HEI 2).*

Ultimately, however, it was the opportunity to apply their learning on practice placements that helped students to put the law jigsaw together, although it might depend on the type of learning opportunity offered as to whether law learning would come alive in practice.

*I find it so much easier this term coming back, having seen the law in practice within our placements. Very abstract before then (student HEI 6).*

*I think that's true but it depends on which placement you're in, like if you're working in statutory children and family, obviously you'll be in contact with that kind of thing going on but you go working in voluntary and it's like the residential area, whereby*

*people just come into like the respite or something, you don't get contact with the law going on (student HEI 6).*

Their law learning had begun to instill in some students a sense of authority, accountability and legitimation. It had also enabled them to acquire knowledge with which they could empower service users and carers, advocate for them, and articulate their rights and the local authority's responsibilities. This, as the following sequence illustrates, in itself enhanced their confidence.

*I think the thing that's come out to me that it's actually the Local Authority that has a legal responsibility to provide services for certain service users and I wasn't totally aware of that. You know, that actually you can advocate, fight for the rights of someone who... And I think that adds validity to our role as social workers - that people are entitled to this, and you're professionally bound to get people these things that they deserve. Something that's come out as a consequence actually, it's enabled me to explain my role as social worker better. It means that people can ask me about my role, whether it's a service user or their family, and I can back it up with legal explanations about what I'm doing and also because there's a lot of scary stuff in the media that might frighten a service user, they think I'm going to push them into an old people's home or something but I can say legally I'm not allowed to do that anyway and neither is your family so it's good, it's an enabling tool for explaining ourselves (student HEI 2).*

Students also referred to what they had learned by committing time to private study, which helped to build confidence and counteract fear of the subject.

*The dread soon changed to ... I quite enjoyed the sessions actually, I was quite surprised. It was completely unfounded, the dread. Once I actually started reading up on it and you know, doing my own research as well, outside of class, I realised it wasn't as difficult as I initially had anticipated, just a mental block that I had actually as opposed to the actual subject. Yeah, and as everybody has been saying with the breaking it up sort of, you know, breaking it into bite size bits, you, it did make it a lot easier to digest (student HEI 3).*

Nonetheless, the breadth and depth of the required law learning could continue to feel daunting. Again, this was related to the time allocated to law learning within the academic curriculum and the timing within the programme, for instance in relation to practice learning. Some students felt that their law learning was a sprint when it should have been a marathon. The rushed pace could aggravate rather than settle their fear and lack of confidence. The following sequence in a focus group is typical.

*-I think because there is so much to learn and because it's such a short space of time, it's been condensed into a few weeks, I don't feel prepared enough for my exam or for the assessed task either. I think if it had been over a longer period of time my mind would have been more focused, whereas now it's just a jumble of lots of things and I've got some knowledge of childcare law but it just seems like there is a*

*minefield of just absolutely everything and I've got to remember it all and how I'm going to remember it all because it's been put in such a short space of time .*

*-Do you think that's because we've had so much to learn in one lesson, we haven't had time to process each bit.*

*-Definitely and I don't think it's about the way we're being taught or the quality of the lectures by any means. I think it's just the fact that it's literally (a few) weeks and that's it, that's all you're going to be taught and you've got to be able to put all this and apply in your assignments, in your mock and in your exam and I'm quite fearful of that really.*

*-For me, there is so much to learn in a short space of time. It's again to do with the mindset because law, you can do a degree in law whereas now we are only doing a module.*

*-You haven't got time to digest the information (students HEI 1).*

Again, concern about the required breadth and depth of required knowledge, in the context of limited teaching time, emerges from the following quotations.

*I think law is huge really and we've only touched the service so it's understanding that there is so much more that we haven't even thought about let alone learnt and is it going to hit us next year or are we ever going to come to it or are we just going to live our lives in blissful ignorance? (student HEI 4)*

*Yes, I think there's so much - you're having to learn, like the Human Rights Act and all the rest of it and what that means, but there's no way I would be able to absorb it so in depth to the point of knowing it all, I think it's important to know enough, plus have the ability to know where to go and check up when you need to know more, but law is so complicated in my opinion (student HEI 5).*

*I just thought this module's too short because although the lecturer is really good at teaching it, it's all crammed in to try and fit it all in so it's really hard to take the information all at once ... Just about the time period you've got from when it starts to the exam it just seems like it's really like squeezed together and all the information is just getting fired out. I just find it hard sitting here writing it all, like trying to take all the information in (student HEI 5).*

*It's really difficult to actually remember it all. While I can vaguely tell you certain bits that we learnt, I would have to go and look through my file and that's just for the bits we've covered this term so actually there's such a long way to go to actually understand the law well enough to be a really confident practitioner and actually use it to the best advantage of everyone that you're trying to use it for (student HEI 2).*

*Mastering the law, that's the side that I find a bit difficult because you will have to have all this stuff in your head whenever you are representing someone or you are trying to provide a service. You should be in a position to remember this and that legislation, that aspect is a bit scary because I don't know if I will be at that particular stage where it just comes into my mind and I know that that Act says this and this*

*person's case requires that particular thing. That's the kind of worry that I have at the moment. Yes, we've been taught a lot and we've had different aspects addressed to us but mastery and application becomes the thing (student HEI 2).*

The nature of law was also felt to add to the complexity which, at their stage of studying and working towards a qualification, they had not been able to resolve.

*In terms of a public authority and the laws that govern the operation, like the duties that the authority has, to provide services, I found it confusing sometimes because even though the law obligates a public body to provide a service, the actual service is at the discretion of the public body and so you can't take it literally, that because the law says do this, do that (student HEI 5).*

*And a couple of the bits of the laws contradict themselves, well through my understanding which could be quite at a basic level but like the Human Rights Act says that a child's human rights starts when they're born, not when the person's pregnant with them, whereas housing law says that two parents that are living apart have the right to be a family, with the lady being pregnant, so that kind of confused me a little bit and it contradicts itself a little bit for me (student HEI 2).*

Nonetheless some students had begun to make connections with other learning from their social work programme, with which to manage their experience of practising social work law.

*I think it makes you need to link the law with the theory behind the stuff we've done before where it's the importance of the way you communicate with people. So if you're not sure of something, the whole ethics of being really honest with someone and saying actually I don't know that off the top of my head right now, I will go find it out, rather than sort of blagging your way through so to speak. Not that any of us would do that obviously, but you know what I mean, you've got to tie it in with your values and social work principles as well as knowing the law as well as you can (student HEI 2).*

This multi-layered complexity led some students, in parallel with group set members, to recommend levels of law learning.

*Just because it's scary. If you were to go into practice now you just wouldn't have a clue really would you, because there is that much confusion with it all. Not that you wouldn't have a clue but you'd be confused, you'd be scared what to implement, what to use to implement, whether you'd be right or wrong, because going back to your short period of what you've learnt, it's just too short. You need a semester on level one law, then a semester on level two law, then a semester on level three law really to get the full ... if that's how important it is to us, well why not teach it that way (student HEI 1).*

It led others to stress the role of practice in challenging their fears and helping them to build confidence. This led students also to reflect further on the time for, and timing of, law learning. The following sequence from one focus group is not atypical

*-In terms of confidence, although you might be expanding your knowledge on certain things, I think being confident in it is a totally different matter. And it think that's where a lot of the fear comes in as well because if you're not confident to put your hand up in a lecture and say in case you might be wrong, how are you going to be able to do that in your assignment or an exam.*

*-And what's the magic ingredient that can turn knowledge into confidence?*

*-Practice.*

*-I think we should do practice before we do the law so we've had some practical experience, and then you can see where maybe, possibly – I'm only thinking that as we talk – see where it fits in more. It's different for some people who probably already maybe are in practice but I'm not in a social work setting or haven't ever been in a social work setting.*

*-My point was mainly with the timescale, we've still got teaching today left but our assignment has got to be in a week, so we all feel really uncertain of everything and now we've to literally a week to try and put all these weeks together in some sort of order ready to put it into the task which we all feel really scared about anyway because it's just come up so quickly and it's terrifying, and you've got to pass this year to get onto your second year. So that's what you see resting on it. Every time you think I've no idea what I'm doing, that's what's at stake (students HE1 1).*

### 6.2.3 Student attitudes towards e-learning

Not all students were unequivocally positive about e-learning. For instance, where students were returning regularly to particular objects with right and wrong answers, some students wondered whether the tools were encouraging surface rather than deep learning.

*The only thing that worries me about it is when you do guess and you think I don't know this, I'm guessing and does it encourage me to guess learn sort of thing and I'm not sure (student HE1 2).*

A few students, with acknowledged particular learning styles, preferred other formats than e-learning. This meant that, whether firmly embedded in the structure of classroom teaching or not, they engaged with part rather than all of the learning opportunities offered.

*I've got to say I didn't find it useful at all. In fact I kind of started to not look forward to the part the session because I got all my information ... everything I enjoyed was the other parts. Obviously that's ... because you're quite right about different learning styles, you're absolutely bang on. For me, interactive with people, bouncing ideas, getting an instant reaction is very much how I learn and I really enjoy that, sometimes to the chagrin of other people around me, because it means things go on for a bit longer because I'm always sticking my hand up. But to be fair once it started to get to that last hour I always felt 'right okay' and then you get on it and I found ...*

*obviously accessing local government websites, learning about specific cases ... and transcripts and looking at those, fascinating, but the boxes and 'what would you do if...?' questions I didn't engage with that at all. I found it a little bit time consuming and I switched off that completely, I've got to say, it didn't engage me in the slightest. I think I got so engaged in the first part that once I'd got to cartoon pictures of people, what would you do, I felt a bit like I was at school again. I thought I'm going to read this thing instead, so that is my honest answer to that (student HEI 3).*

Not all students were computer literate before attending university. Databases and e-learning tools could, therefore, prove “quite complicated” to use. Not all students felt sufficiently well versed either in research skills to track down case law or other kinds of information. For students in this position, there were calls for more input or guidance on using information technology before being asked to engage in e-learning during taught modules. Otherwise there could be a negative impact on confidence.

*Sometimes you could be wading through the internet all day long and really getting stressed because you cannot find a case, and yet if we learnt one, NexisLexis or something, at least it would give you the confidence to perhaps when you came across another type of learning that you would go in and try and do it. I just feel like we're learning law and we're not lawyers but we don't have enough foundation to get the job done (student HEI 4).*

*I think e-learning is fine, I think it could be beneficial if you could actually have, put into your timetable an e-learning session at university, but not at the cost of our law lectures because taking another law lecture away I think is really disastrous, so if it could be added to it, I personally would benefit from that, because not only, it's something, it's like compulsory and you'll go to, it's also if there's an issue accessing, if there's an issue with, anything within the system, you've got someone there on hand to ask (student HEI 5).*

#### 6.2.4 Student experiences of using the social work law reusable learning objects

The potential of the e-learning objects to make links to practice and find ways of bringing learning alive met with a positive response from students. It enabled them to see how law could be applied even if the structure of the object proved a little frustrating.

*A lot more practical as well, a lot more anecdotal and the lecturers that we love and the stuff that we love is all about putting it into real life and giving us examples and that's where SCIE's objects are really quite good because they provide those living examples of how things are applied and how we can think about things and the grey areas and the conundrums and ethics and things that will crop up through that (student HEI 2).*

*I've used the Object 1, again good for examples of applying the law, in terms of navigating round, I found it quite easy to do except if you wanted to see the opposite opinion, you had to back track out and go back in again (student HEI 6).*

Object 10 (All in a Day's Work) also drew praise because of its relevance for practice. However, students also cautioned that an element of self-deception could enter their use of the object, with their answers reflecting how they would like to respond in practice rather than how they actually practise.

*I think the positive aspect of that exercise that we were talking about is the reality of individual situations. I think that is quite good because it does remind you that everyone's different so you've got to look at those situations individually but then there still could be a little bit more guidance once you've considered all the individual factors. So you can sort of answer it in a best practice way and come across as though you've mixed together the two things and everything but sometimes I've felt a bit deceitful to myself because I felt that actually I know that's what they want me to say but I don't know if actually that's what I'd do. Who knows, when we're in practice one day it might be different (student HEI 2).*

Some of the objects, such as Object 1, Introduction to Law, were positively evaluated because they drew on recent news stories to illustrate legal points and also engaged feelings generated by the material; the emotional impact was seen as enhancing the learning. Law learning does seem more effective when it makes an affective impact.

*It was poignant wasn't it, because you recognised the stories, it was something you'd actually read about in the news and then you're thinking a bit in a professional way because obviously when you watch the news you think oh yeah, that's happened and then suddenly it's making us think a bit in with our social work hats on. So that was quite good linking those sort of things together for me (student HEI 2).*

Object 9, Experts by Experience, which contains video clips of service users and carers speaking about their lived experience of social work, also drew positive evaluations from some students because the learning was poignant, made an impact and (anticipating a later theme) did not take too long to make its contribution to learning.

*It's quite interesting actually, that was one of the better ones that I've accessed. I can't say that I've accessed them all but that was one that I did look at because we were directed to look at that and yeah, it's much more poignant when the mother speaks. And the length I thought was quite good, the length of how long they spoke for, I thought that was quite a good one (HEI 2).*

One student drew attention to the affective impact on her learning of having used Object 8, Social Work Practice.

*The one about Evelyn, it showed us a lot of conflict there with what the person wants and your agency and the law and it was quite thought provoking really, I think*

*because you've got Evelyn and her parents saying we want more involvement, we want to see social workers, hear more, we want them to build up confidence with us. And I know from my own experience from working with adults, you go out to do the assessment, you go to do the review, you close the case. So from an agency pulling you that way, so you're pulled by all directions really and then the law as well and the GSCC standards as well come into it (student HEI 1).*

Students were not uncritical of how tutors used the objects. If embedded in taught sessions, they felt that sometimes it was the same ones that were used repetitively. Alternatively, students could feel that using the objects in a full class lecture format did not allow sufficient time to process and understand the learning, which could then raise fears or anxieties and knock confidence. Consequently, some students preferred a seminar format in which the issues and questions raised by the objects and wider law learning could be discussed.

*I think when we first did it in the second year there was about five that we looked at, but I did find that when we came back we were looking at the same five again (student HEI 4).*

Students were appreciative of being given the chance to encounter the objects in class, with then the opportunity to follow up their use in personal study time.

*They were used to demonstrate case studies [some agree] to give us an idea of some of the scenarios that do happen and how do you deal with them, which is quite good ... and you can actually go in there in your own time, whereas in class you might not have enough time, the tutors might not have enough to go through all these scenarios and stuff but at home or in your own time, you can go through that, which is really handy ... We're encouraged to do most of it in our own time because as I said class contact time is quite short (student HEI 6).*

Some appreciated their use in a seminar context, where groups would be smaller and their might be more time for discussion.

*I think they are a bit hurried in class, rather the seminar you prepare almost the whole hour to make your own input then get feedback. You get more confidence when some people say this is right and you compare with others. I think those seminar groups tend to alleviate some of the stress you feel and the anxiety as well because you've got more opportunity to talk to a tutor about it, and that helps to build your confidence more. Whereas when it's like this, like you go home and you're on your own, sort of thing. When you're confused, instead of having to speak up in an auditorium you can do it in your seminar groups (student HEI 1).*

Whether the objects were used in class, seminar groups or personal study time, students expressed a firm preference for them to be embedded in the topic that was the focus of classroom activity in any particular week. They appreciated being directed to particular objects for specific sessions although the guidance on how this can be done may need to be



reiterated at key points through the learning sequence, rather than reliance placed on one means of communication.

*And [lecturer] did actually in our handbook guide us towards certain areas for some of the weeks, but I don't know that everyone reads the handbook all the time (student HEI 2).*

They disliked simply being encouraged to access the objects at home without any reference back in seminars or lectures to what they had learned or experienced. Two focus group sequences illustrate this point.

*-But we didn't discuss it a lot in the classroom, this is the thing isn't it.*

*-(There's) no feedback, is there.*

*-No, that's the thing, they ask us to do these things but then we don't discuss them in class.*

*-It wasn't fed very much into the course at all; I found, it was very much we were told about it at the start of the course and that's it. So that's why I haven't used it as much as I could have done maybe (students HEI 4).*

*-And I was trying to quickly read about Maria [Object 3] and then see if I could find out where the moral/ethical bits came into it. That was quite tricky. I think that would have been nice to pull that out in class, to tease that out and so do we all know what we're talking about when we're looking at morals and structural rights? Because we're talking about law and we still don't know.*

*-Okay, so that was quite complex to do as an individual.*

*-Yeah, it was.*

*-You needed maybe some class discussion to help to clarify the issues.*

*-Yeah. 'Cause that was a good case, but you tried to apply the triangle thing, it got kind of tricky 'cause where do you start and what do you look at? So that was a good case. I forgot about Lek [one of the characters in the case], poor thing! In general it would be good to have a bit more in the lessons about it (students HEI 4).*

Linking lectures to the objects helped to reinforce student learning. Referring to Object 7 (Win a Million), one student observed how they were using the object to track and reinforce their learning.

*I've done it before without having read the chapters before the lecture and then I've done it after the lecture and certainly I get better results after the lecture (student HEI 2).*

This linking could also be done in the classroom. Reflecting on the different learning styles that students bring, there was an appreciation of the variety of learning opportunities that tutors could offer in a two or three hour session. The student talking below also liked the visual nature and impact of the objects.

*I feel it just added another visual, like everybody in the class, because everybody learns differently and I think that class provided a way that everybody could learn and there was the computer, there was [the lecturer's] own experience and putting it into context and then there was just what was written on the ... well, what was on the board, what the law said. So everybody that learned differently could learn in the one session, so I thought the e-learning was good for that as well (student HEI 3).*

There was a strong preference expressed for the interactive nature of the objects, which helped to reinforce learning. This introduced fun into learning.

*The whole thing that actually made that good was that it was interactive. To be honest, with e-learning, at the beginning when they told us e-learning I said oh my word, I hate sitting reading on a computer. But I find that the interactive ones - there were two like that, that are quite interactive - I actually love those and it's nice that you can go back to it again and there are law sections which you can print off for your own reading. So that was actually really, really good. I think you learn more when it's interactive than just reading it (student HEI 1).*

*Again, it's interactive [Object 7, Win a Million], you've got to think. You're not just reading, you've got to think about what you're going to say (student HEI 1).*

Part of that interaction was the giving of feedback. In one focus group there was a strong preference for those objects that provided feedback to the answers that the students had given. This helped to overcome their fear or anxiety, derived from what they realised they did not know or had omitted to consider. Feedback also helped to reinforce or assess their own learning.

*The one that we had to do for this week was really good, the All in a Day's Work [Object 10], where you had to prioritise what you would do first and it actually gave you ... because the other ones you don't get any feedback at the end as to how you've done and the fact that it had actually told you how you'd done at the end and what type of social worker you were going to be, I found that ... because others it sort of says you got this many right but you don't know which. Again with the filing cabinets [Object 8, Social Work Practice] that scared me a little bit because you're picking things and then when you get to the end and it shows you and you're like, oh no that wasn't the right one. It's good but it just shows the things that you don't maybe know. That one was good and it did tell you the right or wrong but it didn't ... as feedback goes it's just that you got it right or wrong, isn't it, it's not any sort of progress. Whereas the one this week told you how you approach things, which I found more beneficial, instead of just right or wrong. Yes, and it tells you an explanation about the way you done it, that I found the most useful so far (student HEI 1).*

*That [Object 1, Introduction to Law] was good because you know the conjoined twins, you got to see why the court ruled (in the way it did), so it got you thinking for and against why you should and why you shouldn't, so that was good. You had your*

*opportunity to select what you were thinking, and then whether it was the right or the wrong. So I thought it was good learning (student HEI 1).*

*The useful bit for me is that I used to read through the other bits where you had like human rights and it had a section and pictures, it was quite fun to do and then I'd go onto the millionaire game [Object 7, Win A Million] to try and see if I could get a million but it was like you could do some learning and then play the game to obviously to test your learning, so it was quite a fun way to do it (student HEI 3).*

Students appreciated the richness of the available content, as when one refers to what she found in the two objects that address court room skills.

*... actually find that bit very interesting so I've been on there, it's got so many things (student HEI 6).*

However, there were also criticisms of the content balance within the ten e-learning objects, highlighting for example what students felt to be omissions. In so doing they make links to learning from serious case reviews and public inquiries. Ethnicity was a focus in one focus group, as this sequence shows, with students' concern that dominant imagery would create a mind set amongst students that would mean that they would not engage sufficiently with issues of race.

*What you could do is mix it up a bit and put some more, like, I don't know, asylum seekers or BME children, because we're supposed to be looking at all aspects of life but it's very ethnocentric. And I think then what happens is you don't say anything because you're afraid of offending anyone, and that is the worst feeling. And Laming picked that up, didn't he, [social workers] were afraid to take on or challenge the father because he was black (student HEI 4).*

*Where e-learning can help is that we can have more cases on people with learning difficulties, we could have more information on ethnic groups. Well wasn't it what you were saying about learning difficulties, how they might start using the human rights law more because of their needs in health are not being met (student HEI 4).*

Another criticism, which also parallels observations made by learning set members, relates to the volume of text in some of the objects. A comment about Object 7 (Win a Million) demonstrates that interaction and the visual nature of the tool was valued but not the detailed explanations that followed right or wrong answers.

*I did quite like it because it's very visual and you know you've got a 25% chance of getting it right, you're constantly re-learning. The only thing I don't do on that site is I don't actually read the full bit afterwards, after I get it right I don't read it because they're quite hefty paragraphs aren't they? I think if it was actually a bit more concise, so kind of key pointers, then I would read it, but because it looks so big and I'm quite, I'll sometimes do it in the evening and in the evening you don't really want*

*something really hefty you just want something light to reinforce the heftier learning you've done earlier (student HEI 2).*

When discussing Object 3, The Law Practice Relationship, one focus group was also critical of the “hefty text” and suggested that the object be reconfigured into layers or levels so that students could drill down in if they so chose. Even so, for one student in this group the object had been useful, reinforcing once more the point about learning styles.

*... But yeah, the whole e-learning thing is a bit more light-hearted and to have that thrown at you is, like you said, it's daunting so maybe that could be, I don't know, there could be further buttons to go further in if you want to rather than just have that page with all that. I think if there'd been more buttons to press I would have gone further and been less daunted but to have a screen full of writing, oh no! Having said all that I think it worked because it certainly worked with me and I've done each section, I've done the mental health one, the family law, lots, so it has really helped me (student HEI 2).*

Indeed, referring to the same learning object, another student found the visual imagery helpful and did not seem to judge the text too weighty. Nonetheless there are cautionary comments about the volume of text in other e-learning objects as well as a reference again to this student's learning style.

*That one with the triangle [Object 3, the Law Practice Relationship], that was quite simple and quite straightforward and it was quick as well which is what you want the night before you go into a lecture because it will go into your head a bit more, it's not pushing anything else out from reading for hours. I found that one easier to engage with rather than ones that go on and on and on, and the fact that it's presented to you pictorially, the triangle. That sticks in my head, I find that easier and then it means that when I click on to look into something further in more depth I will associate that with the triangle. It makes it easier for my learning process to do it that way (student HEI 2).*

Students bring their own distinctive learning styles to e-learning, as well as to social work law learning generally. This meant that different objects appealed to different students. For example, whilst Object 7 (Win a Million) was enjoyed by many students, because it was interactive, for others:

*I didn't really do that because I don't believe in gambling. And I hate quizzes (student HEI 4).*

*And then you ask the expert and he tells you the wrong answer. That really, really annoys me (student HEI 2).*

The following focus group sequence illustrates how the structure of the same object (Win a Million) can evoke diverse reactions.

*-I don't like the three lives thing, because once I get back to the start I just don't try again.*  
*-Oh, I do.*  
*-Oh no it makes me angry with it and I just can't bear to do it again (students HEI 2).*

Once again, some students expressed a preference for some types of object content as opposed to others, linking back again to learning styles. Object 2 (Body of Law) and Object 9 (Experts by Experience) were appreciated by some students for the insights they offered and the connections to practice, as opposed to games which felt false.

*I preferred like the interviews, they had interviews with... parents and grandparents who had had their grandchildren or children taken away, the laws that they had been subjected to, and I found that more interesting than the games and stuff ... Win a Million, I think I played that once and I just got bored. I mean well [lecturer] had just taught us what we were seeing on the computer and the way [lecturer] taught us was a lot more interesting than it was on the computer. I just didn't enjoy the games and the little pop up box things. I preferred ... well the interviews were alright. Well, they were quite good because it was real perspectives rather than like a game (student HEI 3).*

Nonetheless, for others in the same group, the games were felt to be useful for revision and for reinforcing learning.

*But then I thought the games were quite helpful with, like I said, reinforcing your learning to be honest (student HEI 3).*

For some students at their stage of learning, the objects were either too simplistic or too complex. As designed currently the objects do not signpost at which level of learning they are directed. For example, referring to Object 2 (Body of Law) one student commented:

*I remember it but I suppose if I'm looking at it from a point of view where I was just learning about it I found it a little bit over my head (student HEI 4).*

Students would welcome better signposting within each object, and perhaps with a content list as a separate tool, so that they could link particular lectures or fields of interest with specific objects.

*... because I remember in the first week I actually ended up doing stuff that we hadn't even covered yet just because I was experimenting with it and actually it might have taught me a little bit but it's not that helpful when you go into something that you haven't learnt yet. Because I think I misinterpreted initially what the point of it was, or didn't use it properly or whatever. But it would be more helpful for me personally and maybe other students, if you can break the law down into family, mental health, etc (student HEI 2).*

Connected to the level of learning, or where students have reached on their journey towards qualification, is the availability of time to process the knowledge they are acquiring, and the timing of when ideas are introduced. Exposure to the objects could raise rather than quell students' fear and offer too much detail or complexity too soon. This may be further complicated for tutors by the recognition that different students in a class may have reached different stages of learning about law.

*It was quite scary how much you didn't know, considering we were in week five or whatever and we're nearly at the end of course that you don't really know perhaps as much as you should do.*

*I'd say one I found quite heavy going was right at the beginning, the skeleton and the bones and meat and things, I found that quite heavy, difficult to understand (student HE1 1).*

Another comment that highlights the importance of more effective signposting in the objects, individually and as a sequence, also introduces another theme raised by students, that of length. For many students the objects required too much time to complete. One student making this point referred to Object 2 (Body of Law). Another suggested that the objects might be sub-divided, either to introduce greater complexity or just simply to locate more explicitly where different materials can be found.

*The one with the video of the three professionals that were speaking, they all spoke quite at length and that stood out to me because I don't know if it's because I have the attention span of a gnat but I was literally thinking my god this is going on, it kind of disengaged me by the end because I just found it really long (student HE1 2)*

*I found some of them to be a little bit too lengthy, like 100 minutes or a little bit more so you focus for that first half an hour and then you just switch off. So it's like what was said before, it's more interactive, you tend to keep focus, but then you lose track a little bit, that's what I found. Maybe if you had it in two halves, I don't know, because you could then come back to it, have a break and come back to the second part (student HE1 1).*

*I've found with the one where you've got the videos of the people talking, some was a bit long winded because you've to really pay attention for a long time and remember what they've said, it was quite long, some of them. So I found that difficult to take it all in (student HE1 1).*

For another student, accessing the objects as part of preparation for class had been hampered by their length also.

*Within our module handbook, before each lecture we were given the relevant SCIE section to have a look at if we chose to look at it, before the lecture or after the lecture. If you did the whole thing together it's about an hour and a half, and an hour*

*a half before a lecture, when the lecture starts at 10 it's far too much for my brain (student HEI 5).*

The issue of level of learning surfaced frequently. The following sequence is another illustration of how e-learning generally and social work law teaching specifically might prove more effective if pitched where students might be in their learning journey and if lecturers check out in some way what has actually been learned as the module unfolds.

*I don't think it's unique to e-learning. I find that throughout this course anyway, probably going a bit off target, but for me I'd like to do some reading that is a simpler, is an introduction to the topic we're going to talk about, then go to a lecture that's going to explain it in detail more fully and then maybe be given some reading which, if I choose to, I could take it further. For me that would be a better way to learn and I find that, regardless of e-learning, across the board we're really not given that. Often what we're given is some pre-reading which is really heavy, you've got no idea what they're on about, you struggle through this whole chapter by somebody who's like an academic or whatever and they're writing to that level; you read it all, you understand very little of it, you go to a lecture which is then really, really simple and quite often taken directly from the slides, and you kind of fill in the gaps yourself and you're no clearer ... and you come away with maybe not even the right idea and then nobody really checks it because often then at the end of the module you'll get a selection of essay titles, one of which will be relevant to one of the 10 lectures you've attended, so no one's checking whether you've learnt it right or not anyway (student HEI 2).*

Other students wanted an object that would take them through how to understand and analyse a case in order to develop skills that they believed legal practitioners would have. As envisaged, such an object could have text boxes which, when combined, would provide a complete approach to a case. This, they felt, would add to their confidence.

*-But if you can write it as well you've got half a chance, haven't you. But you could maybe put that on SCIE, this is a way to tackle the case, or even to read a case. That would be great, you know, now I'm thinking about it, if you had a little drop box and say this is how you could start evaluating a case. That would be fantastic, honestly. I would love that. Then I'd be like "oh right, that's how they word that". Don't you think?*

*-By that you mean starting with the case scenario and then teasing out the legal components?*

*-I mean maybe taking us through one case and you saying "okay this is what is important, how would you look at it?", and then you telling us this is how I would write it.*

*Like a driving lesson ... (students HEI 4).*

The objects were also not always accessible to students. Video recordings posed particular problems. When working off campus, some students did not have access to fast enough

systems to stream the video; on campus, computers in computer suites were not equipped with speakers.

Some students suggested that the objects should contain web links so that they could either download relevant material or save the connection for subsequent use.

*I think links that went to other... because you can obviously get the Statute of the law up, it's available isn't it, that's if you want to read the whole of it, but I did wonder why there wasn't just a direct link that would come up in a pop up window like, oh, you know, this is the Act in its entirety. Some people may want to do that mightn't they? Nice to download it and have it somewhere where you could always access it, wouldn't it? (student HEI 2)*

#### 6.2.5 The impact of using the e-learning objects on student social work law learning

Among the facilitating features were the SCIE web pages which were felt to be accessible.

*I must say I do like the SCIE website. I find it quite user-friendly (student HEI 4).*

This accessibility could be promoted for some by the visual impact and interactive nature of the objects. The following quotation also refers back to a previous criticism, namely of blocks of text.

*It is, it makes it bright and ... I think it's a psychological thing, I wouldn't like just big blocks of text it switches me off, but having that little picture, and also having the voice (student HEI 1).*

*For me personally I just think it looks more friendly, it makes you want to investigate and read. Just more attractive to the eye (student HEI 4).*

The interactive nature of the objects, and their visual impact, could reinforce learning and build confidence.

*It's interactive, so it just gives a different dimension because sometimes I can read and read and read and I haven't got a clue what I've read but doing things in a different way with colours and with sight and sound, it does make it go in a bit more. And it's reassuring because sometimes you feel like you're taking in so much information you don't actually think you've learnt anything so when you go away and do it and realise that actually you've retained a bit more that you thought it's quite reassuring, okay I can go on and try and learn a bit more because I managed to do it the first time (student HEI 2).*

Students also believed that the format of the objects would be helpful for disabled people.

*But I also think as well it's great because we've got quite a few people who are dyslexic on the course. They've found that more easily accessible (student HEI 4).*



*Potentially, in an anti-discriminatory manner as I have been training, potentially it's accessible to all sorts of people with maybe language barriers, like sensory barriers you work with, it could open up learning to a whole group of people who are excluded from higher education (student HEI 2).*

The objects had also been found useful for revision and self-assessment. Indeed, a striking theme to emerge from the focus groups was assessment and, specifically, students wanted to test themselves and to be assessed regularly on their legal knowledge and their skills in its application.

*It's reinforcing it I think, because it is very bulky, the bits that test you, that's the best bit for me I think, the testy type bits, because then you already think you've learnt it and you're double checking that you understand it and it really reinforces it after the fact. I think I'll find it more useful as well coming up to the exam as a double check to make sure that you're understanding it (student HEI 2).*

However, even where there were perceived benefits of accessibility, use of e-learning had to be balanced or embedded with other learning opportunities, such as classroom time, and not over-used, or used without careful linking to tutor input.

*The wonderful thing about it is the accessibility of information, the instant accessibility of information, is tremendous, but I think sometimes it can be ... I think it's overdone personally, I really do think it's over done. I think there's too much of it (student HEI 3).*

*Some lecturers prefer VLE input, 'go away and read, here's the basic, here's a photograph, you go and develop it'. Some are more 'right let's have a discussion about it, let's move it, let's get some people talking about it' (student HEI 3).*

Among the barriers to using e-learning were time, even when the objects were felt to be relevant to students' practice needs.

*Because a lot of it is about your time, because we've got essays to do so time is so precious. But I think maybe last year I may have glimpsed (the objects). I've not really looked this year to be honest (student HEI 4).*

How the objects were configured could prove problematic – a student who used the text only version found the visual design challenging and unhelpful.

*One thing I want to say about it. Why when I go into it I always get a black background and white text, how do I get out of that? (student HEI 41).*

Technology could also give rise to problems.

*And the trouble is I live in a dip so I haven't got enough power (student HEI 4).*

Overall there were positive comments about what the e-learning objects had contributed to the sum total of students' law learning.

*It's given a wider picture, a wider view, looking at all the different scenarios (student HEI 4).*

They had helped students to develop confidence in their knowledge. Students compared and contrasted the relative merits of e-learning and books. Books were transportable and had indexes, and for some students retained greater academic credibility, but were also heavy and voluminous. The facility of text boxes in e-learning objects, small and ordered, made and would make law more accessible for some students than books where "there's so much to take in".

*I would argue as well for me that 20 minutes was better spent than an hour reading an article (student HEI 4).*

For those who found e-learning more congenial, it was in part because it "fitted in with our lives" (HEI 5) and was a more familiar and routine form of communication.

*I'd say the computer's more part of my everyday life than what reading a book is, even though reading a book I try and make time to do. Whereas a computer, it just automatically happens every day (students HEI 45).*

The objects also made learning fun and more interesting than books for some students, although there were others, whilst keen on using computers, for whom reading and taking notes from books was still useful and enjoyable. Here they would welcome the facility of being able to print out from e-learning objects a summary of key points covered by an object, or the outcome of their interactive learning journey.

In conclusion, whilst e-learning was a useful resource, it supplemented and had to be supplemented by other ways of learning. Using the social work law reusable learning objects had enthused some students with the possibilities of e-learning. The objects helped with the recognition that class time was limited and made available a wide array of learning inputs. However, it was not the whole answer.

*I find it quite positive. If someone said there's e-learning for this, I definitely would have a look at it now because it's a nicer way to do it if you want something a bit more relaxed, like we said. For me it's quite easy and accessible and it's definitely something you think oh that's something to try out. I think it's a positive because to be honest I don't think there's enough face-to-face lecture time in the course as a whole and although it's really a poor substitute it is the only substitute available, I don't know if anybody else agrees with that. Also another advantage is that it could be used to have people who really are experts in their field who clearly can't go round to every university (student HEI 2).*

*I think the e-learning for me it's just a really useful tool to add in with the rest of the learning, it can't really stand on its own. It's a bit like a side-order with a meal, it wouldn't be enough on its own but it does really make the meal nicer (student HEI 2).*

#### 6.2.6 How knowledgeable, skilled and confident do students feel about law in social work?

A number of themes emerge when students reflect on their law learning journey to date. They convey an acknowledgement of learning, an emerging sense of having authority, for instance to challenge what they see in practice, and developing confidence.

*Not overly (confident) but a lot more than I was because I completely didn't know anything about it but now you do realise how it does, in your professional capacity, help you sort of further your professional practice, you know, gives you the authority to do things and keeps you ... sort of protects you and protects the people you're working with as well. So yeah so it looks after you as well as looking after everybody else (student HEI 3).*

*You see a mismatch but then you're at that point to question: well is that right and you question yourself. You're like 'that's not right' but it's because of what we've learnt, we understand that it isn't right what you're doing there (student HEI 3).*

*Definitely, I feel so much more confident on it and it was little things like, is it Section 47 of the NHS Community Care Act, duty to assess, and I think reading that made me begin to understand how it works, why it works and why it changes and how it can change, and has actually given me a lot more confidence in terms of practice ... I'm looking forward to continuing it because I think the more in depth we go, once we dive into the Act into a lot more depth, I feel like I've got enough overall knowledge now to attack the next level I think, for sure (student HEI 3).*

*What it's given me is the confidence to read it, to understand the language, to be able to understand some of the jargon so that I can then ... when I'm learning different types of law, say for example at the school, this is why we're doing this with this child and this is why we have to sign this and get this (HEI 3).*

Students are beginning to learn a language. However, what emerges also is recognition of insufficient time, generally and in the classroom, to deal with acquisition and development of the breadth and depth of required knowledge. There is a sense conveyed that a little learning can decrease confidence.

*I've got a foundation but I need a lot more (student HEI 3).*

They anticipate and express some unease that learning will have to be achieved and consolidated in practice, which places a responsibility on practice teachers and agencies to convey accurate legal knowledge and application, which research has shown they may not always be in a position to deliver (Braye et al, 2007).

*Each week we've done a different law area, we've just touched upon it, 'cause like you say, if you look at housing and things there's so much there, there's no way in a (short) course that we could pick everything up. So it will be on practice, I think, whatever practice we're going into, those are the laws that we're going to be picking up (student HEI 4).*

The question of timing of teaching emerges here too, with students preferring to have had academic input before engaging with practice, if only to be able to compare the difference between law in theory and law in practice.

*I like checklist of the laws that you need to know for certain practices and before like you said, going on practice and learning as we're going along but if you know it then from day one before you go in, then you're much more clear on what the laws are and then comparing it with what practice is. Whereas I think comparing it after relevant practice and then comparing it, there's a theory and the practice of the law, whatever it is, but if you've got that knowledge beforehand, from day one, you know that there's a difference between the theoretical side and the practical side (student HEI 6).*

#### *6.2.7 Student perspectives on how law should be taught and how qualifying social workers should learn about it*

Once again, in students' 'top tips' for lecturers, similar themes emerge. Students prefer e-learning that takes place in class or under the guidance of the tutor, with the opportunity to discuss understandings that have been reached. They like learning that is interactive.

*I think it's using it, like you say, more in the university itself, using it in the classes (student HEI 4).*

*We could do e-learning in class as a warm up even to start a lesson off and say "think about that and we're going to return back to that". And if you had that drop box menu and you say what was the answer? That would be like "oh wow, didn't think about that". That would be more fun/interactive (student HEI 4).*

*I think as well like a bit more active learning because some people just don't always learn just by sort of listening. So if you can make it into more active like where you're finding stuff for yourself and rather than just sat listening and you're actively doing things yourself and you'd learn, well me personally, learn, when I'm doing it for myself rather than just sat there (student HEI 3).*

Law learning that is visual, with the topic brought alive and clarified by practice examples, clearly strikes a chord, and e-learning makes a key contribution here, reinforcing classroom learning.

*Students need to straight after the lecture, which I don't always do, make sure that you've actually taken something on board. That's why with the SCIE learning it's just*

*double checking that you actually know what you've just spent three hours listening to or make sure you actually take your notes away with you and don't just leave them piled under your bed and then find them three weeks later, oh what's this! (student HEI 2).*

*As a revision tool, very good (student HEI 3).*

Law learning should be layered, or comprised of levels so that students can progressively engage with complexity and the skills to manage it.

*Make it accessible because we are all future practitioners, we need to know this, this isn't just something to bear in mind to refer back to when we're talking to our grandchildren, it's something that we're going to have to deal with people and we're going to have to back ourselves up, especially in the next few years so make it accessible for us, make it easily accessible. Putting it under the headings so that I would know exactly where to go rather than having to search around and it means that I could do it at work as well so if I've got a case that's come up I can quickly go there, check it up, make sure that I'm feeling confident enough to go and deal with the service user because that will be beneficial for the service users in the future as well for all of us (student HEI 2).*

The same applies to the e-learning objects.

*I think in relation to the e-learning thing, the clarity of the headings could be worked upon generally. That would be my main feedback. And like we've all said, the layering kind of thing, we all want to assess it at different levels, we might want to assess all of those levels in the whole of our learning but we might not necessarily want to do that that day. So we need to be able to have back buttons ... Just things to be a little bit clearer really (student HEI 2).*

E-learning can help to make complexity accessible, particularly in situations where critical analysis of equally viable and legitimate options is an important learning objective.

*See, that's the good thing when you do use the e-learning and you're looking at Diane's story or you're looking at other things, and it asks you to look at one way and you look at it and then it'll tell you if you look at the other one you would have argued this, and you think 'oh yeah'. So that you know that it's just not one answer, there's two ways to go about something. I think that's quite a good one to do (student HEI 4).*

Students make reference to time and timing in this context, suggesting that law should be embedded across the curriculum rather than located in a single module. Equally, ensuring that all learning has immediate practice relevance was viewed as vital, as well as ensuring that law learning is continued into placement.

*Use real life situations and cases to illustrate the law then we'd maybe be able to understand it better, and then apply to practice ... it would maybe make it more enjoyable (student HEI 5).*

*I would say that when you read law, it doesn't make much meaning until you get on placement and [use] what you've read, like for instance when I came to the country and I read a lot about children's rights, and it didn't make any meaning to me until I got into an organisation where "okay, this is the care order and this is accommodated, this is full care", so it makes more sense to me (student HEI 6).*

Students recognise that the thought of e-learning might deter its use, a reference back to fear which both tutors and students have mentioned. Different people learn in different ways and an appreciation of one's own learning style, and how e-learning fits with that, will therefore be useful.

*To students I'd just say like give the e-learning a chance and don't knock it until ... just give it a fighting chance because some people have the idea in their head that 'oh god, this is a computer, doing that on our own' and they just like disengage before they even started but once you've given it a chance it's not really that bad. I didn't find it that bad really, once you've given it a chance, but it's just the whole process of loading up your computer to find out stuff that you've just been talking about. It's just like 'oh, I could be doing something else with my time' but it's not that bad really (student HEI 3).*

*I'd say for students keep experimenting on how you learn best, and actually challenge it. Keep challenging how you learn best but when you've found it, when you've really found your way of learning, then stick to it if it's what's getting you the results, which at the end of the day is what it's all about. It's passing and getting good marks. If that's how it works for you, that's how it works for you and I would personally say don't make the e-learning a prescriptive part of the learning process, make it a bolt on that adds value rather than a prescriptive part that has to be achieved (student HEI 3).*

Having more time allocated to law learning was a common message from students.

*Also I feel like they really talk us through the law, like rushing us through it, we don't get to understand it in more depth and I don't know much about Mental Health Act and I feel like, I'm in a situation whereby I'm a novice and I don't know anything I should know and I've done a mental health elective and I still don't know those things and when I'm saying I've done mental health elective in university and they're like, "you should know these things", although they've not said it but I feel like they are saying to me, "you should know all the sections on the Mental Health Act 1983 but I don't know the sections (student HEI 6).*

Overall, the students recognise that lecturers can make a meaningful difference to their law learning through their communication and interaction skills, their passion for the subject, and their use of their own practice experience.

*Well, some [teachers] had the ability to keep you focused and some were so boring. I just didn't know how people had the ability to make it so alive and so interesting to so boring (student HEI 5).*

Because of the impact of individual lecturer approaches, students were quick to follow an enthusiastic lead to the e-learning objects, and their feedback reinforces the importance of integration of e-learning within the overall learning strategy for law as an element of the curriculum.

## **7. Conclusions**

The research began with four questions, namely:

- How do educators use the law e-learning objects to support social work students' law learning?
- How do students and educators alike experience their use?
- What are the processes and challenges that arise?
- What are the early outcomes for student learning?

The foregoing findings from educators and students demonstrate how both groups have used and experienced the use of the social work law e-learning objects, the processes involved and the challenges they have had to confront. These have included at times their own anxiety and lack of confidence – for the students in relation to law, and for both in relation to e-learning. Nonetheless, the processes have been fruitful and the outcomes encouraging.

### **7.1 Collaborative capacity building**

The learning set and use of the objects themselves have given set members a better understanding of e-learning and greater confidence in themselves as educators and in blending different media together in the teaching of law to social work students. Participation in the learning set has provided an essential bedrock through the innovation process and has consistently both coordinated and motivated implementation of the project in the member HEIs. Common themes shared between group members in the early stages of the project were curiosity, enthusiasm and an orientation to innovation in teaching. The learning set itself was perceived as providing inspiration to try new approaches (even if those appeared more risky than the familiar approaches), as a means of reducing isolation, as a forum for demystifying complex ideas (either about learning or about research) and as a motivator to maintain momentum. Some members experienced difficulty securing support from their institution for their participation, and the learning set provided an anchor for the task of pursuing the necessary negotiations. Thus the set was experienced as both

stimulating and comforting, but equally at times as exposing, with concern at times that comparisons were to be drawn between different approaches to use of the e-learning objects in the different institutions. Some fears were expressed about 'doing things right'; equally there was concern to keep students' experience at the forefront of teaching, ensuring that the process of the research did not take over or dominate inappropriately. Discussion of approaches to evaluation gave rise to some variable levels of confidence; for most members of the learning set evaluating the outcomes of social work education was a new activity, one which required transferring in or new engagement with knowledge and understanding of research methods. This was experienced at times as setting a steep learning curve.

Early discussions focused on the challenges of embedding the e-learning objects within the law teaching. The use of virtual learning environments within HEIs was common, but it was clear that many of the early frustrations associated with implementation arose as a result of unreliable technology, either with the VLE itself or in the facilities available to students (e.g. computer suites in which it was not possible to use audio facilities). In at least a couple of cases, the uploading of the e-learning objects into the VLE was a new initiative for the institution, and required significant involvement of IT advisors to facilitate the process. Equally, where educators were not alone responsible for all the teaching, it became necessary to liaise with colleagues and in some respects act as ambassadors for the e-learning objects, encouraging their use by others not directly involved in the learning set. This was in some cases experienced as difficult, due to different styles and approaches, or just sheer overload of work, leaving less time and energy for innovation and change.

As the learning set meetings progressed, the discussions provided a focus for planning and implementation of strategies in each HEI, often providing a cross fertilisation of ideas. Responsiveness to students' experiences of learning was strong, and triggered iterative engagement with solving problems and/or fine-tuning the pedagogic approaches used. Key to this often was a search for interactivity, whilst also recognising that group learning requiring interaction is exposing for students and requires careful use of group work in order to make it safe to contribute. Notable in some cases was a shift from reliance on Powerpoint presentation to deliver technical information about legal rules to a more interactive, discursive approach in the classroom, aided by the use of some of the e-learning objects as triggers for discussion, and moving further towards the development of critical perspectives on law, and its relationship with professional ethics. Student enthusiasm for such approaches was experienced as rewarding and stimulating in itself, as was the accompanying sense of liberation in relation to teaching style and approach. Here the aim of class teaching was less to deliver knowledge than to create excitement about the subject, which created its own motivation then to engage with the technical information.

As knowledge of the e-learning objects deepened, educators were more challenged by the process of linking them clearly to student learning objectives. Some of the objects were perceived as requiring prior knowledge of law, and therefore being more suitable at more advanced stages of student learning, and perhaps integrated with reflection on practice learning.



Equally as the learning set progressed, more focus was placed on the process of evaluation, which at key points became the core preoccupation in discussions, particularly during the second full year of iteration of teaching. In some respects it was not until the end of the two full years of evaluation that the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen approaches became apparent. This reflection led in turn to a decision to continue one of the aspects of the evaluation (the student questionnaire) for a further year, which with SCIE's support is under way during 2010-11 and will culminate with a final learning set meeting at the end of the academic year, and a further quantitative data set on student outcomes.

## **7.2 *E-learning as a contribution to student learning about the law***

Most students, whilst able to make suggestions for improvement of the e-learning objects, have found them helpful and supportive of their learning, offering a different and complementary experience to other learning approaches, particularly where their use of the objects is guided and integrated within an overall law learning strategy. While the results from the quantitative data were mixed and related largely to the law course or computer use itself, rather than the specific e-learning objects, they did show an improvement in some areas, significantly in the students understanding of law and their ability to learn about it. The additional data received from two institutions showed that almost all the students had found e-learning useful in their law learning.

## **7.3 *Key messages on the use of the e-learning objects in the law curriculum***

Bringing together the key themes from both the students' and the educators' data provides the opportunity to identify three key messages about using e-learning objects within the social work law curriculum that will enable social work education to move forward with blended learning more generally as well as more specifically in relation to law teaching.

The first challenge is blending the learning. Most students were positive about what e-learning offers but do not see the social work law objects as offering a complete module (which indeed they were not intended to do). Students bring different learning styles which mean that learning strategies should have something for everyone; e-learning brings an additional dimension that is appreciated for its visual impact, affective impact, clarity and accessibility, and interactivity. Equally important in relation to blending is the notion of layering. Layering, or using the ability of a learning approach to create a hierarchy of information suitable to different stages of student learning, is important because it may place different emphasis on what e-learning has to offer at different stages in the law learning journey. Thus at different stages, e-learning may be used to provide a light touch introduction to a topic; at others, it may stretch and challenge students to test themselves in relation either to key facts or to their application in practice.

The second challenge is associated with the first; as well as being well blended within the overall range of learning approaches used, e-learning must be embedded in the learning strategy. Most effective perceived use of the learning objects appears to come when they are integrated within the taught curriculum and not just referred to as an optional extra in students' self-directed study time. Indeed, students can be critical when they perceive

that virtual learning environments are being used by educators as a way of reducing class contact time. They look for added value from independent study tasks, and if tasks such as accessing the e-learning objects are left as optional, students may make the assumption that they have less added value and be less likely to engage with them. Most effective use of the learning objects is believed to come when they are embedded in the curriculum and not just referred to as an optional extra.

Blending and embedding, involving structured use of the objects in class, small group and seminar discussion, followed by directed use of e-learning in students' own study time, would appear crucial if students are to be facilitated to address their fear about the subject of law and to develop their confidence in learning and applying the legal rules. Unless students are particularly motivated, working in isolation and at home appears less effective unless it revolves around set tasks that will be picked up in subsequent taught sessions.

The third challenge is engaging with complexity. Key here is to signpost what each learning object offers and to construct objects for different levels of student experience and their journey towards and beyond qualification. This engagement is facilitated by the accessibility, variety within and the interactive nature of the objects. It is also assisted by careful consideration of the time given to law learning and the timing of it, building up levels of complexity so that students can develop their confidence in their knowledge and skills in applying it. E-learning offers a widening picture of law but the use of the social work law objects requires careful consideration of how students will perceive the level of learning being introduced and the links that can be made through examples to practice. Layout, explanation, interaction and division of objects into short episodes of learning (exercises, text, video) facilitate engagement. Layering within e-learning objects is an important way of presenting complexity, so that students have choice about how in-depth they go, and when.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

This report has given a comprehensive overview of the data arising from the collaborative capacity building process, and has reported in detail on the process and outcomes in relation to engagement with the SCIE law e-learning objects. The outcomes are positive and encouraging about the role of the e-learning objects in helping social work students build knowledge and confidence in law. They also provide indicators about student and educator perceptions and experiences of e-learning in the context of blended learning more generally, which could have a much broader application across other aspects of the initial professional qualification curriculum.

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## Appendix 1

### SCIE LAW E-LEARNING OBJECTS

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/elearning/law/index.asp>

#### 1. INTRODUCTION TO LAW

An introductory resource with an exploration of the importance of law, 4 audio based case studies and a quiz to test knowledge of law. It is suitable especially for an opening module, as it provides an orientation into the subject and will stimulate debate on tricky legal and ethical issues.



*Introduction to Law* raises awareness of:

- the importance and relevance of Law
- how interesting Law can be
- the many ways that Law impacts upon daily living
- the importance of Law to social work
- connections between Law and values

#### 2. THE BODY OF LAW

A video based resource that explores, through interviews with legal experts, and the use of illustrative graphics, the structure of the legal system and the way that the law is made. It is suitable for an introductory module, enabling discussion and understanding of the legal system.

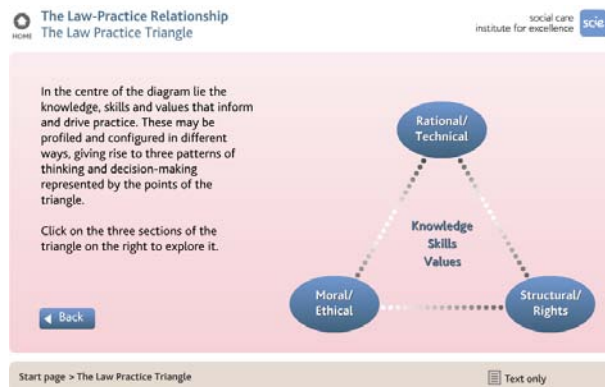


*The Body of Law* explains:

- How law is made
- How social issues may be reflected in the legal rules
- How the legal rules reflect the society of which they are a part
- The relationship between national and international jurisdictions
- The role of the judiciary and of case law
- The separation of powers

### 3. THE LAW/PRACTICE RELATIONSHIP

A triangular model with which users can interact to illustrate three different ways of construing the relationship between knowledge, skills and values in social work law - rational/technical, moral/ethical, and rights-based/structural.



*The Law/Practice Relationship* demonstrates:

- the complexity of the relationship between law and social work in practice
- the breadth of legal knowledge necessary for effective practice
- that law must be subject to critical analysis
- how different options for practice must balance legal rules, moral rules and individual and collective rights

### 4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND INTERVENTION

A case study where users are asked to listen and read key stakeholders' viewpoints and explore the legal issues involved. Users are then asked to explore a series of dilemmas from practice and explore the differing viewpoints of key stakeholders.

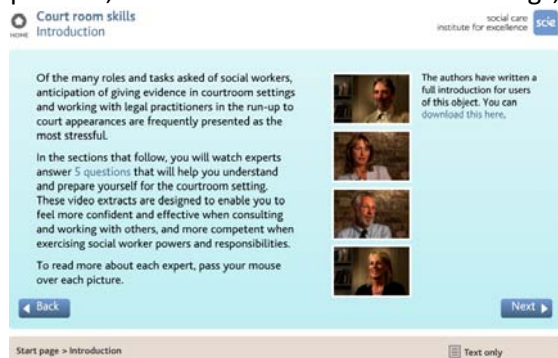


*Accountability and intervention* explores the impact of law on how social workers work, in particular:

- how legal rules influence the process of decision-making (rather than content) in areas such as information sharing, assessment, recording, partnership, decision-making, complaints
- how social work values influence our approach

### 5. COURTROOM SKILLS

A series of video interviews with leading experts that explores messages for effective courtroom practice, different roles in courtroom settings, giving evidence and cross examination.



*Courtroom Skills* aims to:

- Identify messages for effective courtroom practice
- Develop understanding of different roles in the courtroom setting
- Develop capacity to manage the authority of the social work role in court
- Develop skills in negotiation and evidence giving
- Develop knowledge skills and confidence in cross examination

## 6. COURTROOM SCENARIO

A courtroom case study with a social worker, Lottie Goode, and other key personnel involved in the case of “Charlotte Hughes”, addressing preparation and reporting, evidence and cross examination.

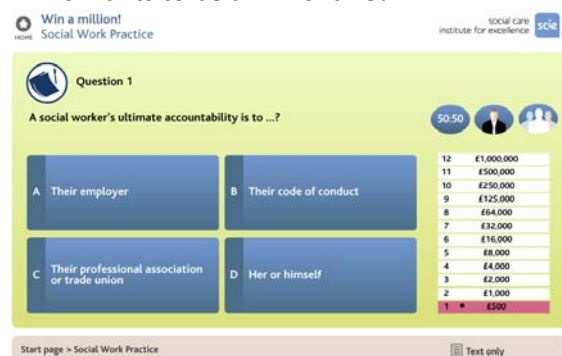


*Courtroom scenario* will enable users to:

- perform confidently in relation to court processes and systems
- appreciate good practice when giving evidence in chief
- develop understanding of, and skills in responding to cross-examination
- identify involvement in the court room as a positive element of practice

## 7. WIN A MILLION

A test of law knowledge in six categories (legal systems, mental health and mental capacity, adult social care, children’s services, youth justice, social work practice) in a quiz based on the format of ‘Who wants to be a millionaire?’



*Win a million!* Enables participants to

- test and develop their technical legal knowledge
- identify the location of specific legal rules in key areas of social work practice

## 8. SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

An interactive case study simulation of the processes of social work interventions (initial referral and screening, assessment and care planning and review and re-assessment ).

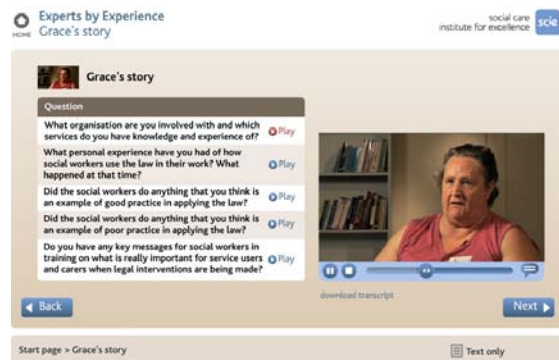


*Social Work intervention* will raise awareness of:

- the legal rules that create the framework for social work intervention in adult social care and in work with children and families
- the different points of intervention – initial referral and screening, assessment and care planning and review and re-assessment

## 9. EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE

A series of video interviews with service users and carers, focusing on their experience of receiving legal interventions.

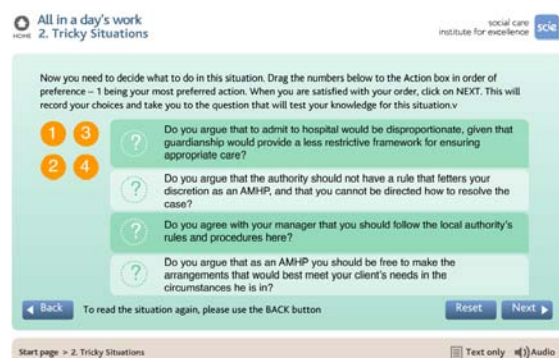


*Experts by experience:*

- Explores how service users and carers have experienced legal interventions
- Identifies how experts by experience identify good and poor practice
- Presents key messages for social workers on what is really important for service users and carers when legal interventions are being used

## 10. ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

A self-assessment tool (using a multiple choice quiz approach) to aid reflection on approaches to using the law in social work practice.



*All in a day's work:*

- helps users to reflect on what approach, or combination of strategies, they adopt to being a social work law practitioner
- enable users to undertake an assessment of their social work law knowledge in a series of tricky situations in which there is no 'right' answer



## Appendix 2: Adapted Kirkpatrick/Barr Model (Carpenter 2005) applied to the research questions

Outcome level	Applied to this context	Ways of measuring
<b>Level 1 Reactions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student satisfaction with the e-learning component of teaching input on law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction survey (e.g. post-teaching feedback questionnaires commonly used in HEIs)</li> <li>Focus groups (researcher visit to each HEI for a meeting with students)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty satisfaction with use of e-learning objects in delivery of teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback during learning set meetings</li> <li>Reflective diaries</li> <li>Meeting with researcher during HEI individual visit</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2(a) Modification in Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student attitudes to law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaires administered at Time 1 and Time 2 (pre and post the teaching intervention)</li> <li>Focus groups during individual HEI visits</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student attitudes to e-learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaires administered at Time 1 and Time 2 (pre and post the teaching intervention)</li> <li>Focus groups during individual HEI visits</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning set members' attitudes to e-learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaires administered at T1 (start of project), T2 (after first full year) and T3 (at the end of the learning set))</li> <li>Meeting with researcher during HEI individual visits</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2 (b) Modification in Knowledge and Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students' law knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exams (right/wrong answers, or multiple choice)</li> <li>Questionnaires</li> <li>Concept mapping</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students' self confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaires administered at T1 and T2 (pre and post the teaching intervention)</li> <li>Focus groups during individual HEI visits</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty self confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaires administered at Time 1 (start of project), T2 (after first full year) and T3 (at the end of the learning set))</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective diaries</li> <li>• Meeting with researcher during HEI individual visit</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3(a) Changes in Behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educator use of the e-learning objects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback during learning set meetings</li> <li>• Reflective diaries</li> <li>• Meeting with researcher during individual HEI visits</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of law knowledge by students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratings of how law knowledge is used in practice (e.g. self-rating by student on placement, or rating by practice assessor)</li> <li>• Rating of short accounts of practice written by students at T1 and T2.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3(b) Changes in Organisational Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maybe developments in the use of e-learning and blended learning by the HEI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback during learning set meetings</li> <li>• Reflective diaries</li> <li>• Meeting with researcher during individual HEI visits</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4 Impact for users and carers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes that result from use of law by social worker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was acknowledged that this level of impact would not be addressed due to difficulties in attributional reliability.</li> </ul>

### Appendix 3: Questionnaires

#### Liaw et al 2007a: Educator - computer use, experience and attitudes

##### 7-point Likert scale: 1 = no experience; 7 = very experienced

1. I am experienced in using operating systems
2. I am experienced in using the Internet
3. I am experienced in using word processing packages
4. I am experienced in using PowerPoint
5. I am experienced in using computers as a teaching tool
6. I am experienced in using e-learning

##### 7-point Likert scale: 1 = no agreement; 7 = high agreement

7. I feel confident making online instruction
8. I feel confident using the Internet
9. I feel confident using e-learning environments
10. I enjoy using computers as a teaching tool
11. I enjoy using e-learning environment for teaching purpose
12. I enjoy using online instruction for teaching
13. I believe using e-learning environments is helpful for learning
14. I believe using e-learning environments is helpful for teaching
15. I believe using online instruction is useful for teaching
16. I intend to use e-learning to assist my teaching
17. I intend to use online instruction to assist my teaching
18. I intend to use the Internet to assist my teaching
19. I am satisfied with using e-learning environments
20. I am satisfied with using MS-Word, MS-PowerPoint files as multimedia instruction
21. I am satisfied with using online instruction
22. I like to use voice media instruction
23. I like to use image media instruction
24. I like to use animation media instruction
25. I like to use colourful text media instruction

#### Panda & Mishra 2007: Educator

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Total teaching experience in years</b>
Female	Professor	
Male	Reader	1-5
<b>Age group</b>	Sr. Lecturer	6-10
26-30	Lecturer	11-15
31-35	Other (please specify)	16-20
35-40	<b>Discipline</b>	21-25
41-45	Law	26-30
46-50	Social Work	31-35
51-55	Both	35-40
55-60	Other (please specify)	<b>'Use of e-learning' experience in years</b>
61-65		1-5
		6-10
		11-15

		16-20	
<b>Frequency of use</b>	<b>Use of computers for word processing and presentations</b>	<b>Use of e-mail</b>	<b>Use of web for information search</b>
<b>Daily</b>			
<b>Weekly</b>			
<b>Monthly</b>			
<b>Never</b>			

**Please score the following statements on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree)**

1. E-Learning will never replace other forms of teaching and learning.
2. E-Learning makes me uncomfortable because I do not understand it.
3. E-Learning is a de-humanizing process of learning.
4. E-Learning can solve a lot of our educational problems.
5. I feel intimidated by e-learning.
6. E-Learning will bring new opportunities for organizing teaching and learning.
7. E-Learning is difficult to handle and therefore frustrating to use.
8. There are unlimited possibilities of e-learning that have not yet been thought about.
9. E-Learning saves time and effort of both teachers and students.
10. E-Learning increases access to education and training.
11. E-Learning will increase my efficiency in teaching.
12. E-Learning enables collaborative learning.
13. E-Learning can engage learners more than other forms of learning.
14. E-Learning increases quality of teaching and learning because it integrates all forms of media, e.g. print, audio, video.
15. E-Learning increases the flexibility of teaching and learning.
16. E-Learning improves communication between students and teachers.
17. E-Learning enhances the pedagogic value of a course.
18. I get a sinking feeling when I think of trying to use e-learning for my courses.
19. E-Learning is not effective for student learning.
20. E-Learning experiences cannot be equated with face to face teaching or even distance education.
21. It is essential that e-learning material is of high quality.
22. Open universities should adopt more and more of e-learning.
23. I am concerned about access to e-learning for students.
24. I lack training on e-learning.
25. There is poor Internet access and networking in the university.
26. There is a lack of technical support in the university.
27. There is a lack of support to help me with the design of e-learning.
28. There is a lack of institutional policy for e-learning.
29. I have inadequate availability of hardware and software.
30. I am concerned about faculty workload.
31. I lack time to develop e-courses.
32. I am concerned about the quality of e-courses.
33. I lack incentives to use e-learning.
34. I am concerned about security issues on Internet.
35. Developing e-learning does not bring me credit towards promotion.

36. I am intimidated by technology.
37. I have no role models to follow.
38. There is no professional prestige attached to e-learning.
39. I have a strong personal interest in using technology.
40. I enjoy the intellectual challenge.
41. I am well supported by good e-learning infrastructure (hardware and software).
42. I am able to access training on e-learning.
43. Using e-learning brings me personal satisfaction.
44. I have good access to technology to support e-learning in my workplace.
45. I get good technical support.
46. I like to be a trendsetter by early adoption of e-learning.
47. Using e-learning can release time/bring about a reduction in my existing workload.
48. There are strong professional incentives for me to use e-learning.
49. Using e-learning gets me credit towards promotion.
50. Using e-learning brings me peer recognition, prestige and status.

**Liaw et al 2007: Student - computer use, experience and attitudes**

**7-point Likert scale: 1 = no experience; 7 = very experienced**

1. I am experienced using Web browsers
2. I am experienced using e-mail
3. I am experienced using word processing packages
4. I am experienced coding Web pages

**7-point Likert scale: 1 = no agreement; 7 = high agreement**

5. I can learn actively in the e-learning environment
6. I have more opportunities to create my own knowledge in the e-learning environment
7. The hypertext online instruction can enhance my learning motivation
8. I can discuss actively with others in the e-learning environment
9. I can read the online instruction actively
10. I can find information actively in the e-learning environment
11. The e-learning environment improves my thinking skills
12. The e-learning environment enhances my problem-solving skills
13. The e-learning environment provides various aspects to solve problems
14. I like colourful pictures in online instruction
15. I like learning videos in online instruction
16. I like the animated online instruction
17. I like the instructor's help and suggestions in the e-learning environment
18. I like the instructor's voice and image in the e-learning environment
19. I like the instructor's online multimedia instruction in the e-learning environment

#### **Appendix 4: Student focus group topic list**

1. Think back to before you started the law module. What were your perceptions of law before you started to learn about it? How knowledgeable/skilled/confident did you feel about this part of the social work curriculum?
2. Is that different at all now that you have had experience of law learning?

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3. How were the e-learning objects used in your law module?
4. Which objects did you find useful? Why?
5. Which objects did you find enjoyable to use? Why?

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6. Were you familiar with e-learning before you used the e-learning objects?
7. What impact, if any, do you think use of the e-learning objects has had on your learning in the law module? – did it make things easier/more difficult/less or more enjoyable?

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8. How knowledgeable/skilled/confident do you feel about law in social work now?
9. Do you have any tips that you'd like to pass on to those teaching law to social workers, or to other students trying to learn about the law?

## **Appendix 5: Educator interviews topic list**

### *Section A*

1. Tell me about your involvement in social work education; how long have you been involved? How long have you been teaching law?
2. In that time what have you found to be the most effective way of helping social work students learn about the law?
3. What have been the main challenges?
4. Have you undertaken any previous evaluations of law learning?

### *Section B*

1. Why did you join the learning set? What did you think you might gain? What did you think you might contribute? What were your expectations?
2. How has the process of participating worked for you? i.e. the experience of being a member. What are the positives? What could be different/better?
3. What outcomes do you think have been achieved for you through taking part? These might be personal outcomes, or outcomes in relation to your law teaching?
4. Have your expectations of participating in the learning set been met?

### *Section C*

1. Has your approach to law teaching changed at all whilst you've been a member of the learning set? If so, were those changes you would have made anyway? i.e. what role has the learning set played in your approach to teaching law?
2. What is your view, honestly, of the e-learning objects? What can they contribute to law teaching? What are the challenges in their use? How could they be improved?#
3. Going forward, what's next for you in relation to teaching law? What's next for you in relation to e-learning?

## Appendix 6: Examples of approaches to integrating the e-learning objects within the teaching sequence

### Example 1: Integration with an adult social care law sequence

Integration of SCIE e-learning objects into level 1 Law for Social Work Practice module
<p>Session 1: The Legal Framework and Accountability for Professional Practice</p> <p>There were two SCIE RLOs integrated into the first taught session of the module</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Body of Law (RLO 2)</b> – why the law? This was embedded within an introductory session entitled “What law should I know about?” It served to respond to students’ expressed anxieties about the law knowledge expectations and to open up discussion in relation to its relevance to social work practice.</li> <li>• <b>Experts by Experience (RLO 9)</b> – Session one ended with a discussion entitled “what difference can I make?” This was illustrated with the use of the film clips, which clearly presented insight into the service user/carer experience of social work practice and offered challenging advice to students directly from service users and carers. This was revisited when exploring legislation relating to the carer role and assessment, and provided further stimuli for small group discussion, supported by the use of current news clips of service user/carer experience, a poignant reminder of why we were engaging with the module in the first place.</li> <li>• The first Independent Learning Task was given at the end of session one - <b>Introduction to Law (RLO 1)</b>.</li> </ul>
<p>Session 2: Human Rights</p> <p>The second taught session began with a review of <b>Introduction to Law (RLO 1)</b>. The focus in this feedback was upon what ethical issues or challenges to values had been generated from the case examples offered. This supported the remainder of the session as it continued to explore issues specifically related to assisted suicide, conjoined twins, eligibility for services and parental rights. This enabled the human rights issues to be brought into play and had direct links to the assessed task which asked students to explore a specific SCIE quote in relation to service users’ expectations of social work practice.</p> <p>The second Independent Learning Task was given at the end of session two - <b>The Law Practice Relationship (RLO 3)</b>.</p>
<p>Session 3: Working with Adults</p> <p>The third taught session began with feedback from students on <b>The Law Practice Relationship (RLO 3)</b>. Discussion focused upon the need for accurate legal knowledge, powers and duties, individual and collective rights, empowerment and ethical issues. This did command a commitment to extra planning and consideration, but clearly added some level of credibility to the session. The fact that this is a national resource and that we are part of a wider community was something that appealed to students.</p> <p>The third Independent Learning Task was given at the end of session three - <b>Accountability and Intervention (RLO 4)</b>.</p>
<p>Session 4: Mental Health</p> <p>This session began with group discussion on <b>Accountability and Intervention (RLO 4)</b>. Issues raised</p>



included values, human rights, professional judgment, assessment process, parallels to our own experience, different agendas, links to assessed task, links to law exam and similar case scenario model, importance of evaluating practice, the impact of public scrutiny. This provided a baseline when faced with the challenge of ensuring that each key area of law and social work practice was afforded time and consideration. I was able to wrap the taught sessions around the learning objects content and then to build upon that to ensure that the aims of the module were being addressed.

The fourth Independent Learning Tasks were introduced at the end of session four - **Social Work Intervention (RLO 8)**, **Courtroom Scenario(RLO 6)** and **Court Room Skills ( RLO 5)** The latter sessions were to build upon the real family court opportunities being afforded by the visiting lecturer for law relating to children.

#### Session 5: Community Care – The Provision of Services

This session began with discussion on how **Social Work Intervention (RLO 8)** had tested out existing understanding of assessment, the complexity of assessment and knowledge. This then supported the theme of the session with focus upon eligibility and was elaborated upon with current affairs news clips on issues relating to personalization, direct payments and FACS with specific discussion on case law.

At the end of the session, the fifth Independent Learning Task - **All in a Days' Work (RLO 10)** - was introduced.

#### Session 6: Safeguarding Adults

The session began with feedback on **All in a Day's Work (RLO 10)**. Discussion ranged across exploring priorities, how case law examples supporting the assessed task, opportunity to engage with dilemmas we can face in practice and discretionary measures.

#### Revision Session:

A revision workshop was held as a recall day from level one placement. The **Win a Million Quiz (RLO 7)** was integrated within the workshop and students were encouraged to use this further either collectively or privately in support of their revision.

## Example 2: Integration within an Introduction to Legal Frameworks module

### Introduction to the module

The module is in the first year of the undergraduate programme and runs weekly for 12 sessions in the first semester. The aim is to provide an underpinning knowledge about the structure of the legal system in England and Wales, as well as introducing students to the relationship between law and social work practice.

The module precedes a 40 day placement, and for this reason it also provides an introduction to the specific areas of social work law, i.e. children, adults, mental health, youth justice, etc., in preparation for their placement.

The sessions are 3 hours long, but are divided into 3 parts, in which a blended learning approach is used.

- 1<sup>st</sup> hour – formal, tutor led lecture
- 2<sup>nd</sup> hour – student-led groupwork
- 3<sup>rd</sup> hour – directed e-learning session in the PC cluster room, where students are encouraged to work in pairs to work through the e-learning objects, continuing if necessary in their own time after the session.

The module is assessed by means of a 2-hour examination where students are required to answer 25 multiple choice questions and a longer answer to one question they have seen in advance.

### Use of RLO 1 – Introduction to Law

This e-learning object was used to support the first taught session of the module. The lecture itself introduces students to the relationship between law and social work, exploring and comparing the value base of both disciplines, as well as looking at issues of professional accountability and authority.

The e-learning object was found to be very useful in consolidating and extending the learning for students following the lecture. The students enjoyed the use of the interactive case studies, especially when they worked in pairs where the case studies led to further discussion.

### Use of RLO 2 – The Body of Law

This e-learning object is used in the second taught session of the module, where the second and third sessions cover the work of the legislature and the judiciary, and introduce different sources of law. They also explore the differences between criminal, civil, private and public law. Between the 2 sessions the students spend a day at the Magistrates' Court.

Students work through the Body of Law in the PC cluster session. It not only explores the relationship between law and social work practice but also further builds an understanding of how law is created and reviewed.

### Use of RLO 4 – Accountability and Intervention

This e-learning object is used to support the fourth session, which looks at secondary legislation, policy and practice guidance. It thus explores further the legal basis of social work intervention,

considering the differences between powers and duties, and looking in detail at Codes of Practice.

The e-learning tool is very useful in expanding further on the lecture through the means of the interactive case studies.

**Use of RLO 7 – Win a Million**

This e-learning object is used within the exam preparation workshop in week 10 of the module, but also for the students to practice multiple choice questions in their own time in preparation for the examination.

**Use of RLO 9 – Experts by Experience**

This e-learning object is used to support session 6 of the module, which explores accountability and a service user's means of redress, from complaints procedures through to judicial review, for breaches of their human rights.

The e-learning tool is useful in providing students with video clips of service users' and carers' experiences of involvement with social workers where the law has been applied. It also generates useful discussion which feeds into the following taught session.